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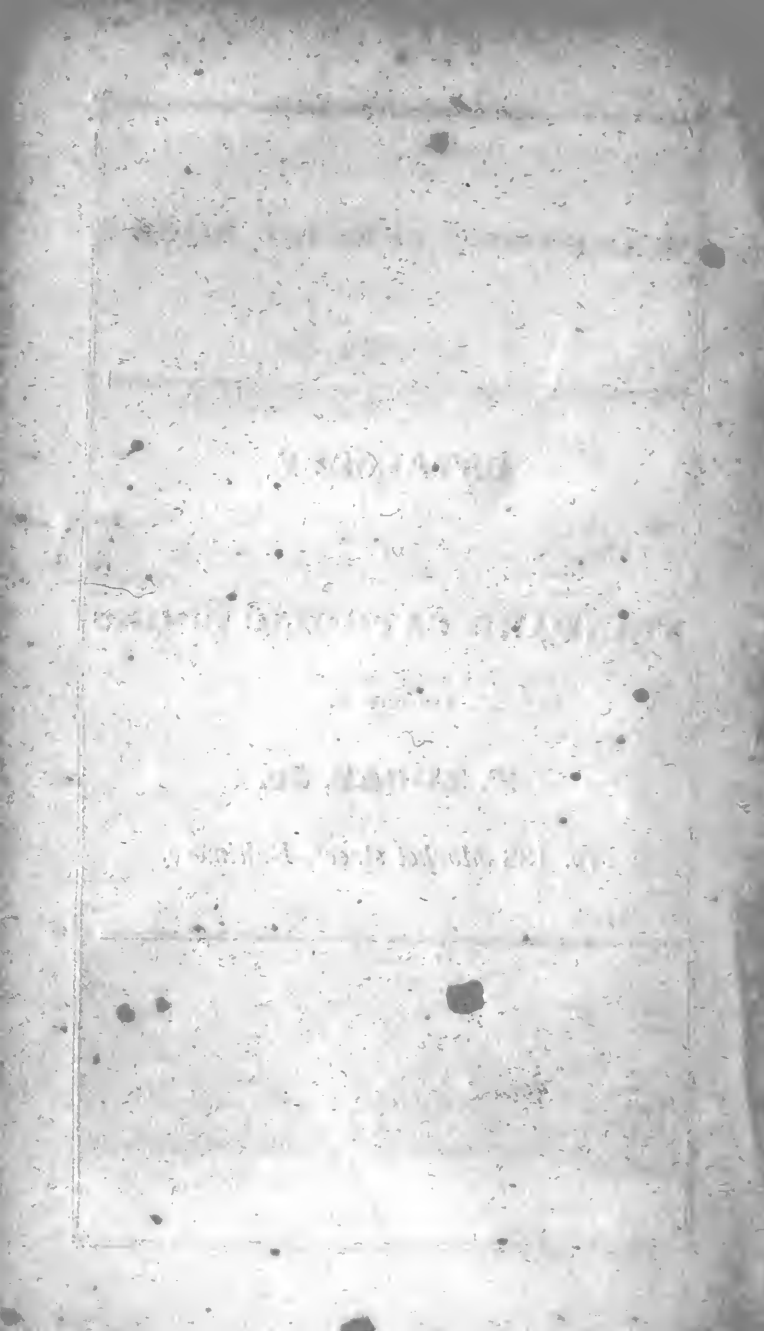
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Who hast any thing, which is not thine? Thou payest, and owest not; thou remittest thy dues, but without prejudice to the rights of thy divine justice. Thou art in every place, and in each entire; thou canst be perceived, but not with human eyes; absent from none, yet far from the hearts of the wicked; but still not absent even from them; for where thou art not by thy grace, thou art present by thy justice. Though present in every place, we can scarce find thee in any; we follow thee, and yet thou removest not; and what we pursue we are not able to attain: for thou possessest, fillest, comprehendest all, transcendest and sustainest all things, by thy mighty power.

Thou teachest the hearts of the faithful without the help or noise of words; thou art not extended with space, nor varied by time, nor nearer, or more distant by motion; but "inhabitest light inaccessible, which no man in this life, hath seen, nor can see." Always at rest in thyself, and yet pervading the whole universe, and every part of it. As thy nature is really one, and uncompounded, it is indivisible: thou sustainest and fillest, illustratest, and possessest all things, and art every where all in all."

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Mrs. Herbert.—I am glad to see you again, my good Margaret. Little Peggy gives great satisfaction to her master and mistress; and is extremely desirous of being acquainted with her duty towards God, and towards them. She begged that I would present her duty to you, and her love to her brothers and sisters.

Margaret.—Indeed, madam, she took a great liberty; but God bless her little soul! Peggy had always a good heart. As for what concerns her duty, to be sure she wanted to be instructed in that. We poor folks in the country, madam, have not much time to talk to our children about it; and besides, few of us know how to read in books, like those that live in towns. As for my part, I never had any schooling at all; and besides, God help me! I have quite enough to do, to put bread into my children's mouths, without giving them learning. However, I always tell them to be honest, and to wrong nobody. Upon that score, neither I, nor their father, (God rest his soul!) had ever any thing to reproach ourselves.

Mrs. Herbert.—You are to be commended for recommending honesty to your children. To serve God sincerely, and to do to others as we would be done by, is the way to heaven, Margaret.

Margaret.—As for serving God, madam—'tis you rich folks that can do that best. For us, who are obliged to work from morning till night—we have hardly time to say an "Our Father" twice a day, and to get to church on the Sunday.

Mrs. Herbert.—You are quite mistaken, Margaret, in fancying that the rich can serve God more easily than the poor. I shall spend the summer in this place; and if you have a mind to come to my house for half an hour on Sundays, after prayers, and to bring any of your friends with you,—we will talk together concerning the means of serving God; and I trust you will be convinced, that you poor people may go to heaven as easily as ourselves. Good evening, Margaret. I shall expect you next Sunday.

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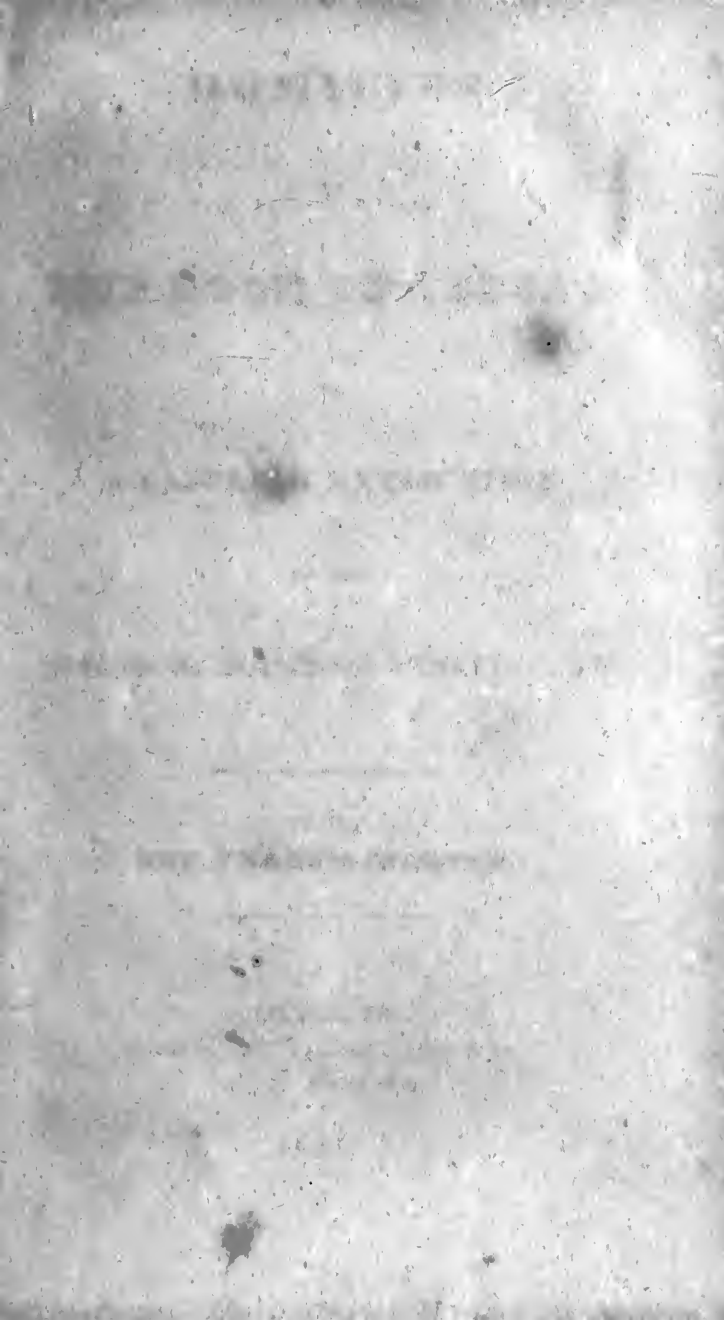
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† JAMES, *Arch'p. of Baltimore.*

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PREFACE.

THERE is hardly a subject on which the notions of the world are more erroneous, more at variance with the doctrine of the gospel, than the nature of sanctity, and the means of attaining to it. Numbers are deterred from even attempting to attain to it, because the world inculcates to its deluded followers, that to be a "Saint" it is necessary to retire from all the accustomed walks of life, and bid adieu to every earthly comfort and enjoyment. Hence sanctity is considered by too many, as the portion of those only who by their profession have renounced the world and consecrated their days to religious retirement. But, it is not from the maxims of the world, or the lives of its followers, that a Christian will form his ideas of that holiness, and sanctity of life, to which he is called. Happily for us, sanctity is not confined to any one state of life, but is attainable in all situations. That Divine Being, who is the common Father of the great family of mankind, has allotted different stations to his children, that each one, by fulfilling with fidelity the respective duties which his station brings along with it, may merit the favour of his Creator and tender Parent in this life, and deserve to receive from the hand of his bounty, a crown of eternal glory in the life to come.

It is true that some of our fellow-creatures who are acknowledged Saints, inspired by God with an utter contempt of all earthly things, have actually renounced the world and its enjoyments; have immured themselves in lonesome retirement, and devoting their days to the practice of constant and rigorous penance, have presented their bodies a living sacrifice to the Almighty. That this

their sacrifice, that these their austerities and self-denials were pleasing before God and acceptable in his sight, is clear from the extraordinary graces and miraculous gifts conferred upon them. Yet, *this part of the conduct* of certain eminent servants of the Most High, who have trampled the world under their feet, and have shewn the sublimity of perfection to which human nature is capable of attaining by the aid of divine grace, is not what we are any where *commanded* to imitate as necessary to make us Saints.

How many holy persons at this time adorn and edify the Church of God by their holiness and sanctity of manners, whose lives present nothing extraordinary or uncommon, except the strict regularity with which they perform the exercises of religion, and the duties of their calling? For this, after all, is the most extraordinary circumstance in the lives of the Saints in general, that their example is followed by so few Christians, while all are capable of copying it, having the same graces to assist them, and the same promised reward to encourage them. Christian holiness and its attendant blessings, belong not to any one state of life, or any one class of mankind exclusively, but are open to all, in every station, who sincerely aim at the attaining of them. This truth is confirmed by the lives of the faithful servants of God, both in the Sacred Writings, and in the history of the Church.

Nothing appears better calculated to remove the prejudices, and correct the false notions of the world respecting sanctity, notions adopted by too many who profess themselves Christians, than to unfold to public view the edifying examples of those who have adorned the common paths of life by their amiable virtues, and sanctified themselves by the practice of perfection. With this view I conceived the plan of detailing to the dear flock entrusted to my care, the history of the virtuous Tobias and his son, as recorded in the sacred volumes. The Book of Tobias has ever appeared to me one of the most interesting and instructive books of the inspired writings. It presents to us, in the virtues of those holy persons, the most edifying models of fidelity in the discharge of the

ordinary duties of mankind. The duties attached to the condition of married persons, parents, and masters of families, are of all others the most important, and those on which the welfare of the greater part of mankind depend. Vice owes its universal spread to that ignorance and that neglect of these obligations which reign in the world. How few parents seem sensible of the duties attached to their condition! How few are aware of the importance of them! How many Christians are seen strictly attentive to certain general duties, but at the same time ignorant and neglectful of the particular obligations belonging to their respective states of life?

We behold in Tobias a model of virtue for every period of life; we see him cautiously shunning in his youth the snares of vice, and the company of the vicious, increasing in virtue as he advances in years; ever steady in the observance of his religious duties; cherishing in his mind a constant recollection of the presence of God; making the divine will the end of all his actions; bowing with humble resignation to all the appointments of Providence; attentive to the religious instruction of his child; anxious that all his family should serve God in sincerity and truth; full of charity for every neighbour; exposing himself to the greatest danger, to fulfil the duties of brotherly love; revered and beloved by all who knew him; reaping, even in this life, the fruits of his piety, in the favour and protection of heaven; and quitting this earthly scene of existence full of merit, hope, and joy.

The young Tobias, like his father, shews us a constant picture of virtue in its most amiable and inviting form; his history lets us into some of the most admirable secrets of God's providence; and contains the most instructive patterns and lessons for young persons about to enter into, or already engaged in, the married state.

It now remains for me to say a few words on the "form" in which the following instructions make their appearance. They are entitled, Homilies, or familiar instructions, having been delivered as a series of familiar discourses. This method seemed to me the best adapted to convey these instructions to the minds of my hearers,

being in itself the most plain and simple, and at the same time affording me an opportunity of dilating more at length than a regular sermon would have permitted, on those points which I thought would be most useful to my flock. As the spiritual improvement of those intrusted to my care was the object of these Homilies, the style will be found less adapted to the subjects that are treated, than to the condition of the persons to whom they were addressed. The greater part of our congregations in general, are persons whose minds have received little or no cultivation, and to whom, therefore, the truths of salvation cannot be delivered in too plain and intelligible a form. Where these instructions have not produced the desired fruit, I am too sensible of my own unworthiness, to ascribe the failure to any other cause. In several members of my flock, the good effects of these discourses have been visible in their better acquaintance with their most important duties, and more diligent attention to the discharge of them. For this blessing, both they and I are indebted to the unbounded goodness of that heavenly Husbandman, who alone, when his servants have planted and watered, can give the increase, and who lets not the unworthiness of his workmen prevent his giving his blessing where, in the decrees of his mercy, he designs to bestow it. To him be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

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HOMILIES

ON THE

BOOK OF TOBIAS.



THE Book of Tobias takes its name from the holy servant of God, whose life and extraordinary virtues it records. Though the Jews did not admit the history of Tobias into what is termed the canon, or acknowledged collection, of inspired writings, yet by the Catholic Church, which received the canon of Scriptures, not from the Jews, but from the Apostles of Christ, this book has always been acknowledged to be one of the canonical Books of Scripture. Indeed we find it frequently referred to as a part of the Bible in the writings of the earliest Fathers of the Church. Whoever reads with any degree of attention the Book of Tobias, must be convinced that there is no portion of the Old Testament which abounds with more excellent lessons of morality, or which is better calculated to inspire a love of virtue, and train the heart to the practice of religion. To open to you dear Christians, the sublime moral precepts which the Book of Tobias inculcates, and at the same time to make you acquainted with the history of that holy man, whose virtues it records, and whose example presents a perfect pattern of the true servant of God, is the design of the following familiar discourses. May the God of all mercy grant that the instructions which they convey, may tend to your improvement both in the knowledge and practice of your Christian duties.

FIRST HOMILY.

Chap. I ver. 1. Tobias was of the tribe and city of Nephthalia.
 2. When he was made captive in the days of Salmanasar, king of the Assyrians, even in his captivity he forsook not the way of truth.....3. But every day gave all he could get to his brethren, his fellow-captives, that were of his kindred.....
 4. And when he was younger than any of the tribe of Nephthalia, yet did he no childish thing in his work.5. Moreover, when all went to the golden calves, which Jeroboam king of Israel had made, he alone fled the company of all,.....
 6. and went to Jerusalem to the temple of the Lord, and there adored the Lord God of Israel, offering faithfully all his first-fruits, and his tithes,... ..7. so that in the third year he gave all his tithes to the proselytes and strangers.....8. These, and such like things, did he observe when but a boy, according to the law of God.

SUCH is the short, but highly instructive account, dear Christians, which the holy Scripture gives of the youth Tobias; a youth spent in the practice of virtue, in the faithful discharge of every moral duty, and the diligent observance of the law of God. Piety is in every age acceptable to God, and the source of grace and blessing to him whose heart obeys its dictates and follows its maxims. But in the season of youth a virtuous conduct is peculiarly pleasing to the Almighty, since it consecrates to him the first-fruits of a being received from him, and destined to promote his glory. At the moment in which we arrive at the use of reason, it becomes an indispensable obligation to each of us, to dedicate our being, with its faculties and powers, to the service of our Creator, by directing all our actions to the glory of God, and performing them with a pure intention of pleasing him, and of promoting the great end of our existence—our union with God in a future state. Happy are they who faithfully comply with this important obligation! Happy those Christian parents, who both by word

and example are careful to instil this grand principle of religion into the tender minds of their children, teaching them to make, at least at their morning devotions, this daily consecration of their actions to the Supreme Being. This pure intention is the essence of Christian piety. Without it, the most heroic outward acts of virtue have no claim to a supernatural reward; with it, the most trifling employments become virtues, are sanctified and rendered meritorious of an eternal crown.

So pleasing is early piety in the sight of God, that he showers down upon those who make him this acceptable offering, such abundant stores of grace as enable them to persevere to the end of their days in the path of virtue. Of this truth the holy Tobias is an admirable and illustrious example. The Scripture testifies, that when but a boy he was faithful in all the duties enjoined by the divine law. His virtue at that early age was put to the severest trial. Nothing could be more dangerous than the situation in which Tobias found himself placed in his youth. Ten out of the twelve tribes of Israel had renounced the worship of the true God, and adored the idols that had been erected by the impious Jeroboam. After a long forbearance and repeated admonitions on the part of the Almighty, the ten tribes were, in punishment of their idolatry, delivered into the hands of Salmanasar, king of Assyria, who drove them from their country, and carried them captives into his own dominions. Notwithstanding this visible display of God's justice, the idolatrous tribes remained obstinate in their wickedness. Among the captives or prisoners was the young Tobias; but the captivity which was to his companions a punishment inflicted by the hand of God's justice, was to him, in the order of Providence, the trial and the perfection of his virtue. How edifying, how encouraging is the example of this holy young man, firm and steady in the practice of every

duty, full of affection for the divine law, and faithful in the exercise of his religion, though living in the midst of his idolatrous countrymen, from whom his virtue no doubt met with the severest trials, with frequent scoffs, ridicule, and contempt! Steady in his adherence to the true faith, Tobias avoided the company of the idolaters, and took no part in their worship. He knew nothing of the temporising disposition of worldlings, who accommodate their profession of religion to times and circumstances. But, sensible of the necessity of true faith in order to please God, and convinced that it is no less an insult to the God of truth to refuse assent to revealed truths, than to disobey his moral precepts, Tobias was careful never to give sanction or encouragement to error by being present at the idolatrous worship practised by his countrymen. With the strictest regularity, he, at the times appointed by the Jewish law, went up to adore the true God, the God of his fathers, in Jerusalem; in which city alone were to be found the priesthood established by God, and the temple chosen by himself to be the place of his divine worship.

In the new law, the holy Catholic Church is our Jerusalem. In whatever part of the world Providence may place us, we are ever to preserve inviolate our communion with this the only true Church, and in her spirit, and according to her laws, to pay our homage and adoration to the Supreme Being. Nothing can justify our joining in any other form of religious worship than that which is established and practised in the Catholic Church, "the pillar and the ground of truth."

The regularity of the good Tobias in the strict observance of the laws of God and his Church, will, I fear, be a stinging reproach, a severe condemnation to thousands of slothful Catholics, who preferring their ease, their pleasures, or their worldly business before their eternal welfare, stay away from the holy sacri-

fice of the mass on Sundays and days of obligation, profane the holidays of the Church by unnecessary work, or disregard the days of abstinence and fasting, which the Church enjoins as a salutary punishment of our sinful and rebellious flesh. In vain will such Christians at the day of judgment appeal to their profession of faith as their claim to an inheritance in the kingdom of life. The Sovereign Judge, while he reproves them for their base ingratitude, will thunder out against them the dreadful sentence, "Depart from me, I know you not."

Obedience to the commands of the Church is a duty inculcated in clear and strong terms by our divine Redeemer, when speaking to his Apostles, and in them to the Pastors of his Church, he says, "He that heareth you, heareth me; he that despiseth you, despiseth me." If they who refuse obedience to the lawful orders of their temporal superiors, are declared by the Apostle St. Paul to resist the ordinance of God, and to purchase to themselves damnation, what shall we say of the crime of those, who called by the divine mercy into the true Church, and acknowledging her sacred authority, despise her injunctions, and disregard her precepts! Let not then, dear Christians, the conduct of others, however great their numbers, however respectable their rank and condition in life, or however edifying their lives may be in other points, induce you to transgress the precepts of the Church. But, like the good Tobias, grateful to Heaven for the blessing of true faith, and the knowledge of your religious duties, and flying from the corruption of evil example, preserve in the whole tenor of your lives an undeviating fidelity in the observance of the laws both of God and his Church. This strict adherence to the practice of your religion will secure you the esteem of those among whom you live, and who never fail to compare your lives with the faith which you profess: it will also draw down the bles-

sing of God upon your lawful temporal concerns, besides affording you a well grounded title to an everlasting recompense in heaven.

Tobias looked upon nothing as trivial or unimportant, which regarded the service of God. He was careful to practise not only the more important obligations of religion, but fulfilled the injunctions of the law in every point: "he offered faithfully his first-fruits and tithes."—It was enjoined by the law, that the first-fruits of the produce of the earth, and the first-born of animals, should be given for the support of the priests. The tithes appointed by the law were of three kinds: one tithe or tenth-part of the fruits of the earth, of corn, and of animals, was for the Levites or ministers consecrated to the divine service; another tithe was to be laid up each year, to be eaten at a feast provided for the Levites and for the poor; the third tithe was to be reserved every three years, to be distributed among strangers and proselytes, that is, such persons as were converted from idolatry to the Jewish faith. In the fulfilment of all these ordinances, Tobias, as soon as he was master of his property, was no less exact than in the observance of the feasts commanded by the law. He did not, as is the case with too many Christians, put the calls of worldly interest in competition with those of duty, nor stop to consider whether the compliance with these obligations might not be injurious to his temporal concerns. Tobias was fully persuaded, that without the divine blessing no temporal concerns can prosper; and that the surest method of securing this blessing, is a ready and exact obedience to the laws of God and his Church. "Who hath first given to God, and recompense shall be made him," cries out the Apostle St. Paul, Rom. ii. 35. This truth was deeply impressed upon the mind of Tobias, and formed an invincible rampart against all the suggestions that flesh and blood might have thrown in the way of a duty, which he perform-

ed from a higher motive than any earthly emolument—the love of God, and a desire of an eternal reward.

As in the old law God was pleased to separate from the rest of his people the tribe of Levi to serve him in the temple; so in the new law, the holy Church of God requires of those who engage in the sacred functions of her ministry, a renouncing of secular employments, and a detachment from worldly business. She exacts from them the most consummate chastity of soul and body, that with unsullied purity they may perform the high and truly sacred obligations of their calling, and, unfettered by any earthly tie, may be ready day and night to attend to the spiritual necessities of the dear souls entrusted to their care. To these salutary ordinances of the Catholic Church are owing those heroic, edifying, and triumphant examples, so often manifested to the world, of pastors sacrificing their ease, their rest, their health, and even life itself, in promoting the glorious work of the salvation of souls.

Having thus provided for the sanctity of her ministers, and the spiritual welfare of her children, in order that no pretext of necessity may induce her pastors to sacrifice any portion of their precious time to temporal concerns, the Church by a positive command enjoins, that all the faithful shall, each according to his respective ability, contribute to the maintainance and support of their pastors. This law of the Church has its foundation in reason and justice, and merely enforces and determines an obligation frequently inculcated in the holy Scripture. In countries where the Catholic religion is not established by law, the manner of fulfilling this duty is left to the conscience of individuals. But each congregation should bear in mind, that the spirit of the Church is every where the same, and consequently it is the duty of all to consider the temporal necessities of their pastors, who minister to their own spiritual wants, and, like Tobias, cheerfully and

conscientiously contribute to the decent support of the ministers of the altar.

Such, dear Christians, are the admirable lessons of morality, of which Tobias, even in youth, was a perfect pattern. This holy man lived under a law in which the means for attaining to sanctity were far inferior to those which Providence has bestowed upon you. You have both the doctrine and the example of a God made man to direct, to animate, and to encourage you. This divine legislator has not only delivered to you his precepts, and pointed out the path which will conduct you to happiness, but has with the price of his blood purchased for you those treasures of grace that will enable you to persevere faithfully in his service until death. These treasures of grace he has left you in the holy sacraments and sacrifice of his Church, the constant and never failing fountains of mercy. Approach to them with humility, with confidence, and with a sincere desire of advancing daily towards Christian perfection. Your diligence and fidelity in using these holy means of salvation, will obtain for you the grace to be faithful in every duty to God here, and entitle you to the reward of faithful servants in the kingdom of his glory hereafter.

SECOND HOMILY.

Chap. I. ver. 9. But when he was a man, he took to wife Anna, of his own tribe, and had a son by her, whom he called by his own name,10. and from his infancy he taught him to fear God and to abstain from all sin.

IN the portion of holy Scripture which forms the subject of my present instruction, the good Tobias is held out to you, my beloved brethren, a perfect model of virtue in the mature age of manhood. You have seen him in his youth an admirable pattern of the strictest fidelity in the exact discharge of every duty. You are now to enjoy the pleasing prospect of the beauteous blossoms of that tender age succeeded by an abundant crop of fruit in his riper years. As the married state is that which embraces by far the greater part of mankind, it is true that the happiness or misery of a very considerable proportion of our fellow-creatures depends upon the discharge or neglect of the duties of that state. There is no class of duties, then, the knowledge of which is of greater importance. Yet it is a fact no less melancholy than certain, that there is no class of duties less known, or more neglected, than this. The history of Tobias will afford another opportunity of directing your serious consideration to the duties which married persons reciprocally owe to each other. I shall for the present, therefore, content myself with observing how careful the good Tobias was in following the injunctions of the divine law in making choice of a wife, knowing, as he did, that his temporal and eternal happiness depended upon his securing the blessing of heaven on that important step. Happy indeed will those Christians be, who, like this holy man, endeavour to make the will of heaven their only guide in the choice which they make, and the sanctification of

their souls their great object in embracing the holy state of matrimony ! Happy, if they carefully observe the regulations of the holy Church of God, by neither contracting marriage with any one who is in the forbidden degrees of kindred, nor celebrating it at the times prohibited by her authority.

The happy fruit of the holy marriage of Tobias, was a son, the heir to his father's sanctity and extraordinary virtue. But to what was the young man's piety owing ? Under God, dear Christians, he was indebted for his innocence and virtue to the care with which his father performed the great and important duties of a parent. "From his infancy, Tobias taught his son to fear God and abstain from all sin," ver. 10. Whoever reads with attention the lives of the Saints, will be convinced of this truth, that the virtuous lives of those holy and faithful servants of God were the fruits of the tender care with which their parents watched over their infant years, and faithfully fulfilled the trust imposed upon them by Providence, of training their children in the path of virtue. On the other hand, observation and experience, both of present and past ages, clearly shew, that the torrents of vice which overrun the world, and bear down so many thousands of mortals into the gulph of eternal misery, have their source in the neglect of parents to discharge the duties which their state imposes on them. Earnestly then do I conjure you, Christian parents, who now hear me, to give me your most serious attention, while I unfold to you, as briefly as I can, the obligations of your state, and point out to you in what manner you may best discharge them.

Your children are the property of Almighty God, to whom they belong upon a thousand titles. In your hands they are to be considered as so many talents, which you are to improve to the best of your power, that you may one day restore them with interest to their great Lord and Master. He watches your con-

duct towards them with a jealous eye, and at the last and terrible day of his judgement will demand a severe account from you of the souls of your children. To impress your minds with a sense of the strict obligation of training your offspring in the path that leads to salvation, and of the judgments which await those who neglect the duty which they owe to their family, God has recorded in holy writ the terrible example of the high-priest Heli. What Christian parent can read the dreadful chastisement with which the Almighty, even in his life, visited Heli's criminal neglect of the duties of a father, and not tremble, lest he should stand accused at the tribunal of the Sovereign Judge of having been wanting in the discharge of his duty to his family ! Meditate with attention on this example, and be convinced of one important truth, that your own happiness for time and eternity depends principally upon the faithful discharge of your duties to your children.

Heli was old and infirm ; his two sons Ophni and Phinees officiated for him in the temple ; but they were bad men, and did much evil among the people, and gave great scandal. All this came to the ears of their father ; he called his sons to him, and gave them this gentle reprimand : " Why do you do these kinds of things which I hear, very wicked things from all the people ? Do not so my sons, for it is no good report which I hear." 1 Kings, ii. 23. But the old man went no further ; he did not use the authority with which he was invested as their parent, to correct them and put a stop to their disorders. For this reason a prophet was sent to him, who, in the name of God, upbraided Heli with his ingratitude for all the favours God had shewn him, declared that his neglect of the correction of his children was honouring them more than God, and denounced the most severe punishments upon him and his family.

All this, however, did not rouse this too indulgent

parent to a sense of his duty, and therefore God appeared some time after to the prophet Samuel, and revealed to him, that all the evils which he had before threatened would speedily fall upon Heli. "In that day, says the Lord, I will raise up against Heli all the things that I have spoken concerning his house. I will begin, and I will make an end. For I have foretold to him, that I will judge his house for ever, for iniquity, because he knew that his sons did wickedly, and did not chastise them." In fact, all that the Lord thus denounced was soon after accomplished. Heli's two sons both died a violent death in one day, and the old man, on hearing the melancholy news of their untimely end, fell backwards from his seat, dislocated his neck, and expired.

The tender minds of children are capable of receiving any impression, of good or evil, virtue or vice; and it is of you, parents, that God expects the fulfilment of the great duty of instilling early into them good and virtuous principles of action, and sowing in their hearts the seeds of virtue. By impressing your children with a reverential love and esteem for you, and placing them during infancy in a total dependence upon you, God has invested you with the power of forming their minds as you please. Regulate, then, your natural love and affection for them, by an earnest desire of their eternal salvation. Let every other concern be an object of inferior importance. Suffer not your affection for them to degenerate into unnatural harshness and severity on the one hand, nor a passionate fondness on the other. Carefully preserve that authority which God has given you, by exacting the most prompt and ready obedience to all your orders, encouraging such obedience by little rewards, and always correcting disobedience. "Give not thy child liberty in his youth, and wink not at his devices. Bow down his neck whilst he is young, lest he grow stubborn and regard thee not, and so be a sorrow of heart to thee." Eccles. xxx. 8.

In the first place, then, there is nothing, Christian parents, upon which the success of your endeavours in training up your children to virtue so much depends, as upon your rendering them thus early tractable and obedient. But in enforcing this obedience there is one caution which I wish much to impress upon your minds. It is, that when one parent orders a child to do any thing which it seems unwilling to do, the other parent never take the part of the child, but that parents always go hand in hand in supporting their mutual authority.

Besides the duty of rendering their children obedient, parents are, in the second place, under a strict obligation of instructing their children in principles of religion and piety, and in the law of God, from their earliest years. It is a duty expressly enjoined by God himself to his people: "These words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thy heart, and thou shalt tell them to thy children." Deut. vi. 6. The first foundation of all religious instruction, is to instil into the minds of children a fear of God, and a horror of all sin. Let it then be your care, Christian parents, to teach your children early to pronounce with reverence and respect the names of God and of Jesus Christ; and by your own example to discourage all disrespectful and profane use of those sacred names. Acquaint them with the torments of a future state which await the wicked, and the happiness reserved for the faithful servants of God. Instruct them in the knowledge of their Creator, and of their total dependence upon him. Teach them the obligation of morning and evening prayer, for the purpose of drawing down the divine blessing, and see that they are regular in the discharge of that sacred duty. As soon as your children are capable of it, consider it as one of your most essential duties to assist them in the learning of the catechism at home, and send them regularly to their pas-

tor, on Sundays and at other times appointed by him, for instruction. Join to your lessons of instruction, a proper watchfulness over the conduct of your children; and carefully remove from them whatever would endanger their innocence, or might prove the occasion of sin, especially wicked servants and evil company. Too many parents, having taught their children their prayers and their catechism, rest contented, as if they had discharged the obligations which their state imposes upon them. They leave their children during the day almost entirely to themselves, giving themselves no concern what servants are employed about them, or with what companions they associate. In these moments of neglect the seeds of vice are but too often thickly sown, and take too deep a root to be afterwards eradicated.

In the third place, parents are under a strict obligation of correcting the faults of their children; a duty frequently and strongly inculcated in holy writ. To impress this obligation upon you, my beloved brethren, and to convince you how jealous Almighty God is of the strict fulfilment of it, I need but remind you of the example of Heli, and the severe vengeance which he drew upon himself, by his shameful neglect of this duty. In administering correction, let a spirit of mildness and prudence be your guide; do nothing in a passion, but, influenced by a real desire of your children's eternal welfare, beg, at least in your hearts, the blessing of God upon your endeavours; and strive to convince your children, that you correct them, not in order to gratify any feelings of your own, but from a motive of duty to God and to them.

But, Christian parents, to what purpose will it be to correct the faults of your children, if your own lives present them with an evil pattern? This consideration unfolds to you a fourth important duty, that of giving to your children a good and edifying example

in the faithful practice of every duty, and the careful abstaining from all sin. In vain will you correct your children for their passions, their sinful words, or the excessive indulgence of their appetites, if your own lives are stained with the crimes which you reprove in them. It is to your *example* that your children look for the principles by which to guide their own conduct; and if by your example, you have drawn them into sin, and entangled them in habits of vice, on your heads will fall with ten-fold vengeance the woes denounced by Jesus Christ against those who scandalize his little ones.

Lastly, it is a most important obligation of parents, to pray for their children. That faithful servant of God, holy Job, rising early, offered up sacrifices and burnt-offerings for every one of his children, lest they should have sinned and offended God. The example of this holy man is recorded as a model of imitation for all parents, who should never fail to offer up their children daily to Almighty God, and make it a part of their morning and evening devotions to implore his blessing upon them. What abundant sources of grace will those parents who are faithful in this duty, open to their children, for their preservation from the dangers of sin, and their confirmation in the way of virtue!

Such, my beloved brethren, is a short view of the important duties and obligations of Christian parents. To sum up these duties in a few words: the Almighty, who has blessed you with children for no other end than that you may train them up for heaven, requires of you, that you make the eternal salvation of your children the principle object of your concern for them; secondly, that you be careful to preserve the authority which he has given you, by exacting from them the most ready obedience; thirdly, that you instruct your children in the principles and duties of religion, and

carefully remove from them every thing dangerous to their innocence; fourthly, that you enforce your instructions by the powerful influence of good example and a virtuous life; and lastly, that not confiding on your own exertions, you endeavour by daily prayer to draw down the divine blessing upon them.

Great and truly awful, dear Christians, is the charge entrusted to parents, and severe will be the account which will one day be demanded of them.— Their own happiness, as well as that of their children, depends upon their faithful performance of the duties attached to their charge. What may be said of the pastor of souls is equally applicable to parents. They can neither stand nor fall alone. If they neglect the care of the souls of their children, the eternal ruin of both will be the dreadful consequence. If they are faithful to their duty, the tender souls which have been trained by them in the path of virtue, will both secure their own everlasting bliss, and will each of them be a jewel of inestimable glory in the unfading crowns of their virtuous parents. Sensible then of the great and truly important obligations which divine Providence has imposed upon you, I conjure you, Christian parents, who now hear me, to imitate the holy and virtuous Tobias in the exact discharge of these duties. Like him, teach your children from their earliest infancy to fear God, and to abstain from all sin. Implant in their tender minds feelings of charity and compassion for their distressed fellow-creatures; and give them frequent opportunities of exercising those feelings, by making them occasionally the distributors of your alms. By fervent prayer, and the devout frequenting of the sacraments, seek the blessing of heaven upon your good endeavours, to train them up in piety and virtue. Oh! what consolation will the thought of your having faithfully discharged these duties diffuse over the bed of death!

With what confidence will you be enabled to stand at the last day before the Sovereign Judge ! With what joy will you receive back from his hand the dear pledges of your mutual affection, ascend with them to the realms of bliss, and enter into the possession of that transcendant glory which is promised as the portion of those who instruct others into justice !—
Dan. xiii. 3.

THIRD HOMILY.

Chap. I. ver. 11. And when by the captivity, he with his wife and his son, and all his tribe, was come to the city of Ninive 12. (when all ate of the meats of the Gentiles) he kept his soul, and never was defiled with their meats.....13. And because he was mindful of the Lord with all his heart, God gave him favour in the sight of Almanasar the king..... 14. And he gave him leave to go withersoever he would, with liberty to do whatever he had a mind.....15. He therefore went to all that were in captivity, and gave them wholesome admonitions.

THE trials and persecutions of this life, which, in the order of God's providence serve for the punishment of sinners, are to the just man the means of purifying his soul, and bringing his virtues to perfection. For, my beloved brethren, the Apostle St. Paul assures us, that "all things work for the good of those who love God, and whom he calls to be saints." Rom. viii. 28. Thus it was with the good Tobias; and the portion of his history which forms the groundwork of my present instruction, exhibits to your view a most edifying pattern of virtue, under some of the severest trials that can befall human nature. Tobias with his wife and son, and several of his countrymen, were, in consequence of their captivity, obliged to take up their residence in the city of Ninive, the capital of the Assyrian empire. The vicious example of the inhabitants of that rich and populous city, added to the weight of the temporal calamities with which God had visited the sins and ingratitude of the Israelites, was too strong for the weak virtue of the greater part of the captives who dwelt there. None but Tobias had the courage to withstand the torrent of corruption, and preserve inviolate his fidelity to the ordinances of the divine law. What grief must have oppressed the heart of this holy man, when he beheld

his fellow-countrymen, instead of humbling themselves under the divine scourges, and appeasing God's wrath by the amendment of their lives, adding to their past crimes the guilt of fresh provocations, by transgressing some of the essential precepts of their religion.

When the Almighty was pleased to call the descendants of Abraham to be his chosen people, the other nations of the earth were buried in the grosest idolatries and superstitions. To prevent his people, therefore, from being infected by the contagion of the evil example universally spread around them, God ordained for the Jews a great number of rites, ceremonies, and legal observances, some of which were constantly recurring to call off their attention from too free an intercourse with the rest of the world. Among these legal observances was the distinction of clean and unclean meats, by which the Almighty would at the same time teach his chosen people the necessity of self-denial, and of restraining their natural appetites; and moreover remove them further from the danger of being infected with idolatry, by preventing their eating with the heathens, among whom they lived. Tobias in his captivity, though placed in a situation most dangerous to his virtue, rigidly observed all the ordinances of the law relative to the distinction of meats. He yielded neither to the cravings of self-love, nor the solicitations of pretended friends, nor the ridicule of unbelievers. With a steady step he continued to walk in the path of obedience, faithfully fulfilling whatever was enjoined by the law, from a pure motive of the love of God, and an earnest desire of eternal life.

The Old Testament furnishes several noble examples, besides that of holy Tobias, of the fidelity with which the servants of God observed the rites of the Jewish law respecting meats. One of the most illustrious of these examples is the truly heroic Eleazar, a

venerable old man, ninety years of age, who, in the persecution under the impious king Antiochus, cheerfully resigned his life rather than transgress the law by eating forbidden meats. No doubt some of his worldly friends, who thought only of his temporal life, would repeatedly suggest to him that there could be no harm in tasting a bit of the flesh of swine any more than of any other animal, and that what goeth into the mouth is not that which defileth a man, and consequently advise him to comply with what was demanded of him, and save his life. But, with what indignation did the holy man reject their crafty solicitations to sin! How did he reproach them for their cruelty, which, under the mask of friendship, advised him to purchase a few moments of a wretched existence that death must shortly terminate, at the expense of losing the favour of the Diety here, and the eternal enjoyment of his glorious presence hereafter! The venerable Eleazar had formed his notions of duty, not upon the false principles of the children of the world, who study only present ease, and seek for happiness in the gratification of their passions, but upon the solid maxims of true piety, which teaches us to make the will of God the sole rule of our actions. He was sensible that in whatever the Creator commands, the duty of the creature is to obey, and that to refuse obedience to the sovereign authority of our Maker is always sinful. Whether, therefore, the Almighty by his own word commands us to abstain from fornication, or to refrain from touching the fruit of some particular tree, or by his Church enjoins at certain times an abstinence from flesh-meat, the transgression of any one of these commands is an act of disobedience, and as such defiles the soul, robs it of the title of a child of God, and deprives it of all claim to an inheritance in his kingdom. Convinced of these truths, the holy Eleazar stood firm in the path of obedience. His pretended friends, seeing

his undaunted constancy, attacked his virtue in a more insidious way. They advised him to make an appearance of complying with the orders of his persecutor, offering to substitute meat which it was lawful for him to eat, that by thus seeming to comply, he might satisfy his enemies, and save his life. But "he," says the sacred text, "began to consider the dignity of his age, and the inbred honour of his grey hairs, and his good life and conversation from a child, and he answered without delay, that he would rather be sent into another world. For it doth not become our age, said he, to dissemble: whereby many young persons might think that Eleazar at the age of fourscore and ten years, were gone over to the life of heathens: and so they, through my dissimulation, and for a little time of a corruptible life, should be deceived, and hereby I should bring a stain and a curse upon my old age. For though, for the present time, I should be delivered from the punishments of men, yet should I not escape the hand of the Almighty alive nor dead. Wherefore, by departing manfully out of this life, I shall shew myself worthy of my old age; and I shall leave an example of fortitude to young men, if with a ready mind and constancy I suffer an honourable death for the most venerable and most holy laws. And having spoken thus, he was forthwith carried to execution. And, when he was now ready to die with the stripes, he groaned and said: O Lord, who hast the holy knowledge, thou knowest manifestly, that whereas I might be delivered from death, I suffer grievous pains in my body; but in soul am well content to suffer these things, because I fear thee. Thus did this man die, leaving, not only to young men, but also to the whole nation, the memory of his death for an example of virtue and fortitude" 2 Machabees vi.—Yes, Christians, thus did this venerable servant of God die; thus did he exchange this short and transitory life for immortal glory; thus did he crown, by a glorious

death, a life spent in the faithful service of his Creator, yielding himself a sacrifice of obedience to the commands of his God. Thus did he leave, not only to his own nation, but to you and to all Christians, a noble example of the fidelity which you owe to the sacred injunctions of God and his Church.

For, my beloved brethren, the precepts of the Church are, in fact, precepts of Almighty God, since it is God who speaks to us by his Church. Our divine Redeemer, before his ascension into heaven, gave to the Pastors of his Church, in the persons of his Apostles, a commission to establish his kingdom upon earth, a power to rule and govern those who should become subject to his kingdom, and consequently an authority to appoint and ordain such regulations as should seem necessary for the welfare of souls entrusted to their care. He had long before pointed out the duty of obedience to their orders, in those words which he addressed to them, "he that heareth you, heareth me; he that despiseth you, despiseth me:" declaring also, that whoever will not hear, that is, obey, the Church, shall have no more claim to the kingdom of heaven than the heathen who adores false gods, or the publican, that is, the notorious sinner, whose crimes render him deserving of eternal damnation. Whether, then, the Almighty condescends to speak to us by his own mouth, and to write with his own finger the commandments which we are to fulfil, or whether he delivers his precepts to us through the voice of the pastors of his Church, these injunctions are all founded upon the same divine authority, and the same is the obligation on our part of faithfully complying with them. Whoever, therefore, lives in the wilful violation of any one of the precepts of the Church, whether as to the neglect of hearing mass on Sundays and holydays, or of abstaining from flesh-meat on certain days, lives in disobedience to the spiritual authority which God has appointed to guide him; and unless he renounces that

disobedience, whatever his life may be in other respects, will not be admitted to a participation of the reward promised only to the humble and obedient.

But, it may be asked, why has the Church given any commandments at all in addition to those expressly delivered by God himself? The answer to this question, my beloved brethren, will establish clearly both the end and the utility of the precepts which the Catholic Church enjoins to her children. I answer then, that the design of these precepts is, to enable us to fulfil more easily the ordinances of the law of God, first, by appointing certain exterior acts of piety best adapted to conduct us to that end; and, secondly, by determining the best time and manner of observing the divine commandments.

To prove the truth of this answer, I shall instance only the precept of fasting and abstinence, as being naturally connected with the subject of this day's instruction. We are all sinners, and in this character owe to the divine justice a satisfaction for the sins by which we have transgressed the law of God. For, by a fixed rule of God's justice, whatever has been defiled by sin, must be purified by the virtue of penance here, or feel hereafter the rigours of an avenging justice no longer tempered with mercy.—Hence those frequent invitations to the practice of penance, which the inspired writings both in the Old and New Testament continually hold out to sinners, calling upon them to take the scourge into their own hands, and, by the voluntary chastisement of their own rebellious flesh, to avert the more dreadful scourges of the divine anger provoked by their crimes. Jesus Christ positively declares to all his followers, “unless ye do penance ye shall all perish;” and proclaims, that “whoever would be his disciple must deny himself, and take up his cross, and then follow him.” His whole life, which is to be the model of ours, was a life of penance: and in this he has been imitated by

all his Saints, who, whatever may have been the peculiar virtues that adorn their character, were all remarkable for the exercise of holy penance. The great Apostle of the Gentiles, St. Paul, though chosen by God himself to be a vessel of election, though unconscious to himself of any wilful transgression of the divine law, though gifted with the power of working miracles, and for the encouragement of his virtue wrapt up to the third heaven, yet did not think himself exempt from the general law of penance, but practised himself the obligation which he inculcated to others. "I chastise my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become a reprobate." 1 Cor. ix.—Shall we, then, who are sinners, look upon penance and self-denial as unnecessary? No, my beloved brethren, deceive not yourselves; penance and the mortification both of the inward and outward man, ever were, and ever will be essential duties of a Christian life. The holy Council of Trent fears not to assert, that the whole life of a Christian ought to be a life of penance. We are under a strict obligation of labouring to appease the wrath of God, to draw down his mercy by works of penance, and by voluntarily abstaining from the use of things which are at other times lawful, to make atonement for our past criminal excesses, and for the unlawful use which we too often have made of what the bounty of God has provided for our support. It is then to teach you these important lessons, and to aid you in the practice of them, that the Church, by the authority with which Christ invested her, enjoins certain times for the exercise of those works of penance that God has declared most available in his sight—fasting and abstinence. Great indeed will be your consolation at the hour of death, if, like the holy Tobias or the venerable Eleazar, you can then look back upon a life faithful in the observance of these holy duties. But miserable will be your condition, and dreadful will

then be your anguish of soul, if when you stand before the tribunal of an all-seeing Judge, you shall be charged with having added to your other crimes, a wilful disobedience to the Church of God, with having neglected to use the salutary means of atoning for the heavy debt due to the justice of God, and with having brought a scandal upon your religion, and caused the enemies of your faith to blaspheme, by your irreligious lives. Living, as the first Christians did, in the midst of those who, through ignorance or prejudice, look upon your religion with an eye of ridicule and contempt, let your conversation be good among them, by the faithful observance of the laws of God and his Church; that, whereas they speak of you as evil doers, considering your good works and holiness of life, they may be most powerfully convinced of the purity of your faith, and uniting themselves to the one fold of the one Shepherd, may be brought to glorify God in the day of his visitation. The world, though it affects to treat the virtues of the servants of God as folly, yet cannot refuse them the tribute of admiration and respect. It dreads them, because it well knows that nothing so strongly tends to lessen the numbers of its own deluded followers, as the good example of the virtuous; yet it cannot withhold from the latter its sincere esteem of their heroic conduct. Tobias, though alone in the path of virtue, drew upon himself the love and veneration of the wicked. King Salmanasar himself admired his virtue, shewed him marks of his favour, and gave him leave to go whithersoever he would.

In the cup of afflictions, which his providence presents to his chosen servants for their trial, the Almighty usually mingles some drops, at least, of his heavenly consolations, both to reward their fidelity and to encourage them to perseverance. Having humbled Tobias, by making him a partaker of the captivity and afflictions which had befallen his breth-

ren, God now permits him to enjoy a little sunshine of prosperity in the favour of his prince. Tobias, ever steady to his principles of virtue, acknowledges the finger of Providence in his prosperity, no less than in his adversities. He employs this short season of peace and tranquillity in acts of benevolence and mercy towards his persecuted and distressed brethren. He shares with them the bounties of his prince, distributing freely among them what he himself had freely received. He accompanies his acts of charity with the more holy and more efficacious exercises of spiritual alms-deeds; admonishing his sinful countrymen of their ingratitude to God, the source of all their misfortunes; exhorting them to receive their afflictions in the spirit of sincere repentance, by humbling themselves under the mighty hand of God; to acknowledge the visitation of his mercy, and by renouncing their evil ways, to turn their captivity into a powerful means of atoning for past crimes, and securing to themselves for the future the mercy of their offended God.

Whatever be your station in life, my beloved brethren, let this example of the good Tobias be the model of your conduct. If God has been liberal in bestowing upon you temporal blessings, be you liberal in dispensing a share of them to your distressed fellow-creatures. If he has given you little, of that little give cheerfully, according to your abilities. Be each of you faithful, like this holy servant of God, in exercising the spiritual works of mercy to your fellow-creatures, by contributing, as far as lies in your power, to the salvation of the souls of your neighbours. This is done, first by procuring instruction for such as are ignorant of the principles of religion, especially your children and others entrusted to your care; secondly, by endeavouring to promote the conversion of sinners, to withdraw them from the path of vice, and by wholesome admonitions reclaim them from their evil

ways; lastly, by good example, and an edifying life, opening the eyes of others to see the way of truth, and powerfully inclining their hearts to embrace it. Your fidelity in these holy duties will prove to your souls an abundant source of grace during life, of joy and consolation in death, and entitle you to an everlasting reward in heaven.

FOURTH HOMILY.

Chap. I ver. 16. And when Tobias was come to Rages, a city of the Medes, and had ten talents of silver of that with which he had been honoured by the king: 17. And when amongst a great multitude of his kindred, he saw Gabelus in want, who was one of his own tribe, taking a note of his hand, he gave him the aforesaid sum of money.

THE holy Tobias, as my last instruction informed you, by his edifying life and virtuous conversation, by his undaunted constancy in the path of virtue, and his steady adherence to the divine law, gained the esteem and veneration not only of his own countrymen, but of the heathens among whom he lived. The king himself honoured Tobias with his friendship; and, knowing his charitable disposition, furnished him with considerable sums of money for the exercise of his benevolence. The holy servant of God, who set no other value upon riches than as they enabled him to imitate the bounteous Giver of all good gifts, by dispensing blessings to his fellow-creatures, faithfully employed the presents of his prince in acts of mercy and charity to his distressed brethren. During the latter part of the reign of Salmanasar, the rigours of the captivity of the Jewish people seem to have been softened. The tribe of Nephthali, to which Tobias belonged, was no longer confined to the walls of Ninive. Gabelus, who was of the same tribe, had fixed his residence at Rages, a city of the Medes.—Tobias finding himself, in consequence of the king's generosity, blessed with the means of alleviating the distresses of his countrymen, travelled over the whole country in search of those who were in want. While he excluded none of his fellow-creatures from partaking of his charity, he was careful to exercise this virtue with prudence, and according to the order pre-

scribed by the law of nature and religion. Those who are connected with us by the ties of kindred and the bond of faith, have the first claim upon our benevolence. Hence the severe reproaches which our divine Redeemer made to the Pharisees, because they taught the people to transfer to other purposes of charity, the relief which by the strictest of obligations they owed to their nearest kindred, their parents. Hence also the advice of the Apostle St. Paul, "whilst ye have time, do good to all men, but especially to those who are of the household of the faith." Gal. vi. 10. Acting up to these principles of duty, Tobias sought for the first objects of his charity among his own kindred. At Rages, he found Gabelus, his relation, in want, and he assisted him in a manner, which at the same time that it proved of the greatest service to his kinsman, would not be injurious to himself. To enable Gabelus to rise from the unfortunate situation to which he had been reduced, and to aid him in making a provision for himself and his family, Tobias kindly lent him ten talents, requiring for his security a note of hand. Ten talents amounted at the lowest calculation to nearly two thousand pounds of our money: with this sum Gabelus was raised from the brink of destruction, and found himself in a condition to acquire a decent maintenance for himself and family. As the relief which Tobias afforded his kinsman, was a charity undertaken from the purest of motives, and guided by prudence and discretion, heaven gave a blessing to this exercise of mercy, both with regard to the giver and the receiver, as the sequel of this history informs us. During the short sunshine of prosperity which Tobias enjoyed, his whole time was employed in acts of charity and benevolence, though the holy scripture selects merely the example just given to you, because it points out a species of brotherly love but seldom practised by mankind, though of all others the most easy; and frequently, as in the case of Gabelus, attended with the

most beneficial effects. Those to whom God has given far more than is necessary for their own wants, forget that they are only stewards of the sovereign Lord and Master of all, with whom there is no distinction of persons, and who will one day demand a severe account of the talents entrusted to them. Instead of searching, like the good Tobias, for deserving objects of charity, and tasting the real happiness to be found in doing good to others, in enabling the reduced tradesman to rise superior to the hardships that oppress him, or aiding the industrious peasant to provide more decent covering, and a better meal for his half-starved and almost naked family, the rich ones of the world too often close their eyes to the scenes of woe that throw a gloom round their splendid habitations, and shut their ears to the cry of misery. Strangers to the truly enviable happiness of resembling the God of mercy, by diffusing blessings to their fellow-creatures, they know no other value of riches than that they enable them to purchase the gratification of their passions, and to riot in voluptuousness and sin. Thus, their riches, which, if faithfully employed, would have rendered them beloved of God in this life, and powerfully advance them to their crown of immortal glory in the next, become the instruments of destruction to their immortal souls, shut out the grace of God during life, and close against them, in the hour of death, the gate that leads to everlasting bliss. "Go to now, ye rich men, weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon you.—Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are moth eaten. Your gold and silver are rusted: and the rust of them shall be for a testimony against you, and shall eat your flesh like fire. You have stored up to yourselves wrath against the last day." St. James, v. 1.

Ver. 18. But after a long time, Salmanasar, the king, being dead, when Sennacherib his son, who reigned in his place, had a hatred for the children of Israel: 19. Tobias daily went among all his kindred, and comforted them, and distributed to every one as he was able, out of his goods. 20. He fed the hungry, and gave clothes to the naked, and was careful to bury the dead, and them that were slain.

While the virtuous Tobias enjoyed the favour of his prince, his charity had free scope to exercise itself in whatever place, and in whatever manner he thought proper. But this liberty lasted not long. King Salmanasar, who had so much befriended Tobias, died, and was succeeded by his son Sennacherib, a mortal enemy of the Jewish people. Tobias, by his fidelity in the discharge of the duties of piety and charity during his friendship with the late king, had prepared himself to meet with fortitude the change occasioned by the death of his benefactor, and secured the graces necessary for the hour of trial. Moreover, by his prudent management of his temporal concerns, he had, notwithstanding his great charities, laid up sufficient for the wants of his family, and found himself, though deprived of the king's bounty, still enabled to administer relief to his afflicted countrymen. His purse was ever open to the call of distress; and when money failed, he distributed to every one as he was able, out of the goods that were in his possession. Admirable as the charity of Tobias appeared in the season of prosperity, it shone with much greater lustre in adversity. Like a cloud, which for a time obscures the brightness of the sun only to render its light more refulgent and more welcome, affliction puts the virtues of the servants of God to the test, proves them to be real, and manifests them to the world in their full splendour. The difficulties also, to which the practice of virtue in time of persecution exposes the saints, considerably enhance the merit of their edifying conduct, and add to their crowns. Convinced of this truth, the holy Tobias, bereft of all earthly protection, continued

with assiduity his usual acts of mercy, confiding in the care of that all-wise and just Providence, which in the day of the final distribution of its justice will proportion its rewards to the charities that have been exercised in its name. If, as our divine Redeemer assures us, not a cup of cold water, given from a motive of charity, shall pass unrewarded, what an immense weight of glory shall grace the crowns of those faithful stewards of the God of mercy, who shall be found, like the good Tobias, to have consoled the afflicted, reclaimed the sinner, fed the hungry, clothed the naked, and cheerfully relieved their distressed fellow-creatures! To such will the sovereign Judge declare, "Amen, I say to you, what ye have thus done to one of these, ye have done unto me, enter ye into the joy of your Lord." Is there one among you, my beloved brethren, who, if the Saviour of the world, who poured out the last drop of his blood for our salvation, were in person to solicit a favour from you, would ungratefully refuse to grant it? Behold him then in the person of those distressed objects who daily crave your charity. Give relief according to the ability with which God has blessed you, but give from a sincere motive of pleasing God, and of gaining a reward in heaven. Thus will you lay up to yourselves treasures in that kingdom where neither rust nor moth consumeth, nor thieves break in and steal; but the glorious presence of that God, who is himself the exceedingly great and secure reward of his servants, shall fill your happy souls with everlasting joy and delight.

Ver. 21. And when king Sennacherib was come back, fleeing from Judæa by reason of the slaughter that God had made about him for his blasphemy ; and being angry, slew many of the children of Israel, Tobias buried their bodies.22. But when it was told the king, he commanded him to be slain, and took away all his substance23. But Tobias fleeing naked away with his son and with his wife, lay concealed, for many loved him.

I have already informed you, my beloved brethren, that out of the twelve tribes into which the children of Israel were divided, ten had renounced the worship of the true God, and, in punishment of their idolatry, had been delivered into the hands of Salmanasar, and had been led away prisoners by him to his own dominions. The two tribes which remained in their native country, were the tribes of Judah and Benjamin, and composed what was called the kingdom of Judah, of which Jerusalem was the capital city. Sennacherib, flushed with the success which had attended his father's invasion of the kingdom of Israel, and impelled by the hatred which he himself entertained for the Jewish race, led a mighty army into Judæa. Puffed up with pride, he imagined that nothing could resist his power. To his pride and self-conceit he added the most impious blasphemy ; a crime of all others the most insulting to the Diety, since it attempts to pull him down from the throne of his majesty, denies his attributes and perfections, and treats him with open contempt. At the time in which Sennacherib invaded Judæa, the throne of Judah was filled by Ezechias, one of the most virtuous monarchs that ever reigned. To him the haughty Sennacherib sent an insulting message, imperiously commanding him to deliver up himself and his people, telling him that it was in vain he trusted in the protection of God, for that God would not be able to prevent their falling into his hands. Ezechias, shocked at this blasphemous denial of God's omnipotence, rent his garments with grief, put on the garb of a penitent, covering

himself with sackcloth; and, as his only consolation, repaired to the house of the Lord, to pour forth his soul in fervent supplication for mercy. At the same time, he sent the most ancient and virtuous of his priests, clothed also in sackcloth, to the venerable prophet Isaiah, his counsellor and director, to beg of the man of God to put up his prayers also for the remnant of the children of Israel. Pleased with the humble confidence of the virtuous king, the Almighty inspired his prophet instantly to assure Ezechias that the threats of his enemy were vain, and that his blasphemy should meet with a speedy and severe punishment. The holy king was comforted; but, having received a second insulting and blasphemous message from the general of the Assyrians, redoubled his prayers, expressing his firm hope and confidence that the Almighty would shew forth his power for the protection of his people. God heard his prayer, and bade his prophet declare to him, that the king of the Assyrians should not come into the city of Jerusalem, nor shoot an arrow into it, nor even cast a trench about it. "By the way that he came, he shall return, and into this city he shall not come, saith the Lord. And I will protect this city, and will save it for my own sake, and for David my servant's sake. And it came to pass that night, that an angel of the Lord came, and slew in the camp of the Assyrians a hundred and eighty-five thousand. And when Sennacherib arose early in the morning, he saw all dead bodies. And departing he went away, and he returned and abode in Ninive."—4 Kings, xviii. xix. With the vengeance of that God whom he had blasphemed, followed him; here it overtook and cut him off in the midst of his impious career; but not until he had added to the weight of his past crimes the guilt of many fresh acts of cruelty, injustice, and murder. Stung with madness at the thoughts of his late defeat, but not at all humbled or changed by the scourge that he had

drawn upon himself and his people, he returned home, covered with shame, but full of pride, malice, and revenge. Though he had so lately felt the severe vengeance of that God whom he had blasphemed, he neither thought of atoning for his crimes, nor petitioning for pardon. Still bent upon the gratification of his lawless passions, he resolved to wreak his vengeance upon the unoffending Israelites in his own dominions. He commenced a cruel persecution against them, and put several of them to death, leaving their bodies unburied, as a terror and affliction to their surviving countrymen. In this calamitous situation, Tobias, though exposed to certain danger of losing his property, if not his life, continued with undaunted constancy his usual acts of mercy, and added to them the burial of the dead, and of those that were slain. His charity soon reached the ears of the wicked king, who commanded him to be slain, and took away all his substance. But God, in whom he trusted, watched over the life of his servant; and while, for the trial of his virtue, he permitted him to be deprived of his worldly possessions, suffered not a hair of his head to be hurt. For Tobias, hearing of the king's order for his death, fled away naked with his wife and his son, and lay concealed. The hand of Providence guided him to a place of refuge, and as it had formerly conducted Joseph into the pit and the dungeon, for the perfection of his merit, so now it led Tobias into his solitary and painful retirement, to manifest him to after ages as a model of consummate virtue, and as a pledge of the care which the Almighty takes of those who faithfully serve him. Tobias, in the poverty and distress to which he was reduced, reaped the fruits of his former virtues. The consciousness of his past fidelity filled his soul with sweet tranquillity, a certain foretaste of heaven; and many who had witnessed and felt the effects of his charities, now shewed their affectionate esteem for him, and gladly received him

at their tables. Tobias in his affliction, though stripped of all his goods, even of his very clothes, and depending for subsistence upon those whom he had formerly relieved in their distress, was far more happy than the cruel Sennacherib on his throne, racked with remorse for his crimes, with disappointed ambition, and with a dread of death, which would level all his pride, deprive him of all that had engaged his affections, and hurry him before the judgment-seat of a God whom he had blasphemed. Short-lived is the prosperity of the wicked. In the height of their pride, they may laugh at the threats of divine justice, and despise the calls of God's mercy; but the day of retribution will most assuredly come, and manifest them to the world a dreadful example of the folly of preferring earth before heaven, and of expecting to find any real happiness in the path of sin, or in the gratification of their passions, which brings along with it nothing but remorse of conscience here, and conducts to an eternity of misery hereafter.

Ver. 24. After forty-five days, Sennacherib the king was killed by his own sons.... 25. And Tobias returned to his own house, and all his substance was restored to him.

Sennacherib, having filled up the measure of his iniquities, was slain by his own sons, while he was in the very act of adoring his false gods, and paying to idols the homage which he owed to the true God, whose vengeance he had already felt, but whose judgments he had despised. Such was the punishment which, even in this life, overtook one of the most powerful monarchs that ever reigned upon the earth. But do you, my beloved brethren, meditating on his example, carry your thoughts beyond the grave.—Contemplate those everlasting fires prepared for the unrepenting sinner. Tremble, lest, like the impious Sennacherib, you should stand accused at the hour of death of having insulted the God of heaven by mur-

muring against his Providence, by profaning his holy name, and by calling down damnation upon yourselves or your fellow-creatures, or of having been guilty of a murder infinitely worse than the death of the body, the murder of the souls of others by evil conversation, impure discourse, or bad example. Repair all past scandals by an edifying life for the time to come. Break off all evil habits, more especially of swearing or lewd conversation, the sources of ruin to so many unhappy young persons. Consecrate the remainder of your lives to fidelity in the divine service. Study the example of the good Tobias, and imitate his constancy in the path of virtue. Thus will every circumstance of your lives, both in adversity and prosperity, prove to you, as it did to him, the means of advancing you in the way that leads to perfection here, and to the crown of glory laid up for you in heaven. Amen.

FIFTH HOMILY.

Chap. II. ver. 1. But after this, when there was a festival of the Lord, and a good dinner was prepared in Tobias' house,.....
 2. he said to his son, go, and bring some of our tribe that fear God, to feast with us.

To renew in the minds of his people the memory of his past mercies, and of the astonishing wonders which he had wrought for their deliverance; to inspire them with gratitude, and fill their hearts with a love of their almighty Benefactor, God himself was pleased to appoint for the Jews certain festivals, which he commanded to be celebrated with great solemnity. The principal of these festivals, my beloved brethren, were the Passover, in which the Jews celebrated their deliverance from the slavery of Egypt, by sacrificing and eating the paschal lamb; the feast of Pentecost, in memory of their receiving the law from God on mount Sinai; and the feast of Tabernacles or Tents, in memory of their having dwelt in tents during their forty years sojourning in the wilderness. To shew the design of these festivals, Moses, when in the name of God he enjoined the religious observance of the paschal solemnity, thus addressed the Israelites: "When your children shall say to you, What is the meaning of this service? You shall say to them, It is the victim of the passage of the Lord, when he passed over the houses of the children of Israel in Egypt, striking the Egyptians, and saving our houses. This is the observable night of the lord, when he brought them forth out of the land of Egypt: this night all the children of Israel must observe in their generations." Exodus xii. 26, 42.—To give glory to God, and instruction and edification to his people, was the intention with which the feasts of the old law were estab-

lished by God himself. The Saints who lived under the Jewish dispensation, were careful to fulfil the duty thus enjoined them. It was on occasion of one of these festivals appointed by the law, that the holy Tobias made a feast in his own house and invited some of his friends to partake of it. The piety of Tobias was not of that gloomy cast which forbids every kind of mirth, even such as is innocent, and throws an air of rigidity and despondency over religion, which serves to render it unamiable, if not disgusting. True piety is ever amiable and inviting. Though her seat is in the heart, yet she diffuses a sweet odour around her, and paints a joy upon the countenance, which bespeaks the tranquillity and peace that attend her throne. Tobias knew well that the principal design of the festivals of the law was to honour and praise the god of mercy, and was careful to spend in acts of religion the greater part of the days appointed to be kept holy. But he refused not the body its proper share in these solemn rejoicings. By the innocent entertainment which he provided for his friends, he both testified the inward gratitude of his soul for the divine favours, and expressed his ardent wish that they also might join with him in the same pious dispositions.

But, my beloved brethren, if the blessing appointed to be celebrated with yearly festivals in the old law thus called for the praise and gratitude of the faithful servants of God, how infinitely more sublime and holy are the feasts of the Christian Church, and how infinitely more strict is the obligation, incumbent upon us, of manifesting our grateful praise and thanksgiving to that bounteous God, whose astonishing mercies we are on these occasions summoned to commemorate! The blessings of the Jewish covenant were chiefly temporal blessings; at the very best but types and shadows of the benefits poured out upon man under the Christian dispensation. We have witnessed God himself descending from heaven to become our

Lawgiver, our Victim, our Redeemer, our Model, our Teacher and our Guide. For us he clothed himself with mortal flesh, led a life of humiliation and suffering; for our example he practised the precepts which he had delivered, and first trode the path that is to conduct us to our true happiness; for us he bled in the garden and on the cross; for us he triumphed over death, rising glorious from the grave; for us he ascended to his throne of everlasting glory, as our Leader and our Head, to prepare for us a mansion in the regions of bliss, that where he is we also may be; for us he poured forth his Holy spirit on his Apostles, established his Church, the pillar and the ground of truth; for us he enriched her with the treasures of grace purchased by his blood; for us he has appointed on earth an emblem and a pledge of the eternal feast of love reserved for the elect, having, by an admirable abridgment of all his other wonders, transformed himself into our food, that, entering into our breasts, he may transform us into himself, and becoming one with us, may unite us to himself by an inconceivable union of love, which beginning here, may continue throughout an eternity of bliss. Shall these his bounties ever be forgotten? Shall we ungratefully refuse him the slender return of our praise and thanksgiving? Shall we not raise up our voices to him on the throne of his glory and sigh for the happy completion of his mercies, when, united to the choirs that incessantly adore him, we shall begin the song of praise that will never end? Oh! let us then begin upon earth this happy employment, which will one day form our only occupation in the kingdom of the blessed. "If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, may my right hand be forgotten." Psalm cxxxvi. If I forget thee, O my God and my Saviour; if I forget thy mercies, may my tongue cleave to my palate, and never more be loosed to sing thy praises: Let us, as becomes faithful children of the Church, religiously observe the days appointed by her for the celebration of past mercies.

Sensible of the weakness and ingratitude of human nature, and fearful lest you should be found wanting in one of the most important duties of a rational being and a Christian, the adoration, praise, and gratitude due to the Supreme Being, the Church yearly renews before your eyes the mysteries and blessings wrought by that God "who was made flesh and dwelt amongst us," to become our instructor and our Redeemer. In the annual circle of her festivals, you behold the Son of God born in a stable, submitting to the knife of circumcision, adored by the magi, conversing with men, insulted and condemned by his own creatures, expiring on a cross; rising from his tomb, ascending into heaven, sending down the Holy Ghost, and enabling twelve poor fishermen, in spite of the opposition of the world and the devil, to establish and propagate his kingdom over the nations of the earth. Other festivals, such as the feasts of the Blessed Virgin, the Apostles, and principal Saints, are appointed by the Church as a yearly tribute of thanksgiving to God, to whose grace those his chosen servants were indebted for their sanctity and its crown. How truly encouraging is the example afforded us on these festival days, of so many of our fellow-creatures rising superior to the weakness of human nature, trampling the vanities of the world under their feet, and triumphing over Satan, sin, and hell! How consoling, at the same time, is the reflection which the recurrence of these festivals awakens in our minds, of the communion we enjoy with these our fellow-members of the Church, who have already attained to the glorious consummation of their labours! Secure of their own happiness, they are now solicitous only for our welfare! Compassionating the frailties of our nature, and knowing the temptations and snares to which we, who are still sorrowing in this vale of tears, are exposed, while prostrate they adore the gracious Author of their own happiness, they pour forth their fervent

supplications for us, petitioning the God of mercy, through the merits of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, to bestow upon us those graces that may enable us to walk in their footsteps during life, and in death may unite us with them in a participation of immortal glory. Such is the doctrine, my beloved brethren, of the communion of Saints, a doctrine inculcated and practised in every age since the days of the Apostles; inserted in the creed, or abridgment of Christian faith, which those very Apostles framed.— But I shall not enlarge further on this point at present. I shall content myself with observing, that whether we consider the festival days of the Church as recalling to our mind the mysteries wrought by the Blessed Trinity for our redemption and sanctification, or as placing before our eyes the examples of those of our fellow-members who have already arrived at their crown, nothing will more powerfully aid us in our endeavours to lead a virtuous life and in attaining to the end of our being in the joys of heaven, than to celebrate with fidelity, and in the real spirit of the Church, the feasts appointed by her. The holydays of obligation are few in number, yet, through the sloth and insensibility of Christians, strangely neglected. It is a duty of strict obligation on those days to abstain from servile work, and to assist with attention and devotion at the adorable sacrifice of the mass. Sometimes indeed it may happen, that a reasonable plea of necessity may prevent the fulfilment of this duty. But with those who truly desire to serve God here, and to enjoy him hereafter, how very seldom is this the case. Perhaps you will tell me, that you see great numbers of Catholics, who, on these days, without any scruple, follow their usual employment, and absent themselves from mass. I know, dear Christians, and I lament that number of those who thus transgress their duty on the feasts of the Church, is great. But I know also what will be the sentiments of these unhappy Chris-

tians at the moment of death, and when they shall stand trembling at the judgment-seat of their Saviour. I have witnessed the anguish of soul with which the sinner, at the awful hour of his departure, has been overwhelmed, from the recollection of his criminal neglect of these and the like important duties. Melancholy was the scene; and may the God of mercy grant that you may never exhibit so sad and mournful a spectacle in your dying moments! May you, my beloved brethren, be partakers of that joy and consolation, which the memory of their past fidelity in the practice of their religious duties, diffuses over the death-bed of the servants of God! But let it then be your care during life to imitate this their fidelity. On the solemn festivals of the Church abstain from work, and assist at the holy sacrifice of the altar. Let nothing but real necessity excuse you from the fulfilment of this obligation; and when such necessity does occur, obtain the sanction of your pastor for being dispensed from the observance of this duty. Let your care on this point extend to all under your charge, and see that your respective families are punctual in complying with the precept of the Church on these days. Bring them with you to the house of God, watch over their conduct during the time of divine service, and dedicate some portion of time on the festivals to their religious instruction. If your distance from chapel prevent your attending a second time on these days at the public service of the Church, fail not to sanctify at least one hour of the afternoon, by calling your family to prayer, and the hearing of the word of God. Be not afraid that your faithfully giving these days to the duties of religion will be any injury to your temporal concerns. Such fear is unworthy of a Christian soul: it becomes only the breast of an infidel, who either disbelieves the existence of an all-just and good Providence, or knows nothing of the promises which God has made to those who faithfully serve him.

Have you ever beheld the Catholic that neglected his religious duties successful in his worldly business? or, if you have, did you not at the same time see his riches prove a curse to himself and his family? Oh! believe me, my beloved brethren, the only method to secure that blessing from above which will give success to both your temporal and eternal concerns, is to be faithful in the service of your Creator, to give to him that which belongs to him, and to observe religiously the days devoted by the Church to the praise and adoration of the bounteous Giver of all good gifts. Having then, on these days, given a proper portion of time to the fulfilment of the duties which I have pointed out to you, take your amusement; but let it be such, that while it proves a relaxation of mind and body, it may not tarnish the innocence of your souls. Like the good Tobias, prepare, if you please, a feast for your friends, and manifest the inward joy of your heart by the outward pleasure with which you entertain your acquaintance, and the innocent mirth that seasons your conversation. But, like the same holy man, select your friends from among those who fear God, whose discourse will be edifying, and whose example will powerfully incite you to the practice of virtue. Of the weighty influence of good example, Tobias is a striking proof. At first he stood alone in the path of virtue, but his good life, his acts of charity, and his holy conversation, soon made an impression upon the hearts of those who were more intimately acquainted with his merit. They forsook both the company and the manners of the idolaters: they attached themselves closely to Tobias, and endeavoured faithfully to copy the bright pattern of virtue which he set before them. With these holy persons, therefore, Tobias associated; these he made witnesses and partakers of the entertainment which he had provided for the celebration of the Lord's festival, of the inward joy which he derived from the testimony of a good con-

science, and of the heartfelt cheerfulness with which he sacrificed every earthly satisfaction to the lasting pleasure arising from acts of charity and virtue. Here then, my beloved brethren, is a model for yourselves in the choice of your company and amusements on the days consecrated to God's service. Be not of the number of those who give one half of these days to God, and the other half to the devil; who in the morning are found in the temple of the deity among his adorers, in the evening are to be met with in the house of Satan, in the company of his votaries, witnesses at least, if not actually partakers, of the scenes of drunkenness, gaming, and lewd and wicked discourse, which too generally reign in the ale-house and the tavern. Perhaps you may flatter yourselves, that, because you do not actually join in the above crimes, there is nothing essentially wrong in your spending now and then a few hours in the places and in the company to which I allude. But do not thus delude yourselves. If, under the influence of this deceitful sentiment, you thus without scruple frequent the resorts and the society of the wicked, the enemy of your souls has you much more securely in his possession than if he were to lead you to the commission of some enormous sin. You stand on the brink of a precipice, and you know it not; you hold by the hand those who are actually tumbling down the steep, and do you flatter yourselves with safety? Were the devil to solicit you, or even prevail upon you, to consent to some grievous sin, your situation would not be half so dangerous. Your eyes would then open to the sight of your misery, and you would fly to repentance for refuge and protection. But in leading you into the society of the drunkard, the impure, the swearer, and the libertine, Satan treacherously robs you of the fruit of your prayers and religious exercises, makes you his instruments in bringing a scandal upon your faith; and in thus rendering you the cause of hindering the salvation of others, deprives

you of the graces of God, and links you in bands of friendship with those "who are enemies of the cross of Christ, who glory in what ought to be a subject of shame and confusion to them, and whose end is eternal destruction." Phil. iii. 18. Oh! fly then, my beloved brethren, these pernicious haunts of vice, these houses of sin; and shun that fatal bane of souls, evil company. Choose for your friends and familiars those who fear God, with whom you may go hand in hand in the practice of virtue, and with whom you may reasonably hope that you shall one day be found at the right hand of the Sovereign Judge in the day of final retribution.

Tobias had sent his son to invite his friends to join with him in celebrating the festival of the Lord.

Ver. 3. And, (continues the sacred text.) when he had gone, returning, he told him that one of the children of Israel lay slain in the street. And he (Tobias) forthwith leaped up from his place at the table, and left his dinner, and came fasting to the body.....4. And taking it up, carried it privately to his house, that after the sun was down, he might bury him cautiously.....5. And when he had hid the body, he ate bread with mourning and fear.....6. Remembering the word which the Lord spoke by Amos the prophet: Your festival days shall be turned into lamentation and mourning.

Who can refuse the tribute of praise and admiration to the charity of Tobias? With him every thing gives place to duty. The call of charity finds him ever ready and cheerfully obedient. Neither company nor amusement, neither the call of hunger nor the fear of punishment, can prevent the good Tobias from exercising the works of mercy. One of his countrymen had been murdered, and his body lay in the streets unburied. Tobias had already exposed himself to death by undertaking the same charitable office of burying the dead. Yet, unmoved by fear or any worldly consideration, he leaves his meal and the company of his friends, and going to the dead body, takes it upon his

shoulders and brings it to his house, intending to commit it to the earth in the dusk of the evening, that his charity might escape the observation of his enemies. The sight of the dead body of one of his countrymen who had thus on a sudden been deprived of life, filled the holy man with the deepest affliction. But being accustomed to regard every thing that happens as appointed by an all-wise Providence, and to turn every circumstance of life into a source of virtue and of merit, Tobias, on this melancholy occasion, recalled to mind the words which God had spoken by Amos the prophet, threatening his people, that, in punishment of their crimes, their festivals should be turned into days of lamentation and mourning. He accepted, therefore, of his present affliction in a spirit of resignation and penance, and offered it up an agreeable sacrifice to the Almighty, to draw down mercy upon himself and his afflicted countrymen. This his conduct points out other exercises of piety, by which you may sanctify the Sundays and holydays of obligation. It shews that acts of penance and charity, which are at all times highly pleasing to God, are particularly acceptable to him on the days dedicated to his service.

Having then shewn you the intention of the Church of God in appointing her annual circle of festivals; that she designs to renew before your eyes the memory of past mercies, to aid you in the important duty of praising, adoring, and thanking the Author of all good, and in imploring fresh favours from his bounty; that for your encouragement and assistance in the path of virtue, she presents you with the example of the Saints who are gone before you, and are now your intercessors in heaven; I conjure you, my beloved brethren, as you value your eternal welfare, faithfully to fulfil the precept of the Church in the religious observance of her feasts. Abstain on those days from servile work, assist devoutly at mass, instruct your families, seek

the company of the virtuous, exercise the works of mercy, and accompany these holy actions with acts of penance and contrition, mourning over your past sins. This is that mourning of which it is said "blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted with peace of mind here, and the blessings of eternal peace hereafter."

SIXTH HOMILY.

Chap. II. ver. 7. So when the sun was down, he went and buried him..... *8.* Now all his neighbours blamed him, saying: Once already commandment was given for thee to be slain because of this matter, thou didst scarce escape the sentence of death, and dost thou again bury the dead?.....*9.* But Tobias, fearing God more than the king, carried off the bodies of them that were slain, and hid them in his house, and at midnight buried them.

FOR the trial of the virtue of the servants of God, a strange variety of dangers and temptations are permitted, by an all-wise Providence, to assail them during the short time of their mortal pilgrimage. Among these trials, my beloved Brethren, there is hardly any one which proves a more serious obstacle in their progress towards perfection, or which more frequently induces those who have begun to labour for their salvation, to abandon their undertaking, than human respects, or a fear of what the world will say of them. What the enemy of man cannot compass by his own arts and malice, he too often succeeds in accomplishing by some of our unhappy fellow-creatures, who act as his agents in seducing or deterring others from the practice of virtue. When his other weapons have failed, the infernal spirit attacks the followers of the Gospel with the ridicule and reproofs of worldings, and by this means he too often succeeds in undermining their piety. Many who would have nobly braved the severest tortures for their faith who had in fact already triumphed over the rudest assaults of that most fierce and dangerous enemy, the flesh; who had edified the world by their virtue, and laid up a rich store of merit for eternal life; have shrunk before the taunts and ridicule of pretended friends, and, for fear

of being blamed or laughed at by the giddy followers of the world, have abandoned the path of virtue. Like the opening bud of some tender flower, broken from its stem by the rude wintry storm, their virtue sinks before the chilling blast of worldly ridicule, and dies. Or it may be said to resemble a tree, which, after being clothed with rich blossoms, withers before the worm that gnaws at its root. Thousands of unhappy mortals, who had begun the career of virtue, and felt within themselves a desire of eternal life have been suddenly stopped in the midst of their progress, because the world has branded their piety with the imputation of folly, and assailed them with its sneers and its censures. Some indeed struggle for a while against the torrent that opposes them; but tired of the toil at length cease all opposition, and are carried off by the violence of the stream into the gulph of eternal perdition. Melancholy indeed is the reflection excited by a contemplation of the dreadful havock of souls, which is thus made by a foolish fear of the ridicule of the world. But how far more melancholy will be the thoughts that will one day rack those very souls that have been thus seduced and cheated of their crown. To think that they once enjoyed the near prospect of eternal bliss, and for the paltry consideration of screening themselves from the sneers of deluded worldlings, suffered themselves to be robbed of the fruit of their past virtues, and consented to take up their portion in everlasting misery—Oh! how cutting will be the reflection!

Few, my beloved brethren, few are those, who like the good Tobias, set the laughter and contempt of the world at defiance; whose virtue rises superior to every human consideration. You have seen, and you have admired the fidelity with which that holy servant of God persevered in the steady practice of virtue, and more particularly in the exercise of the works of mercy. His earthly sovereign threatened him with death,

if he pursued his usual charity of burying the dead. Of his worldly friends, some reproved him for exposing his life to danger by continuing that holy office, while others laughed at his piety, and ridiculed it under the appellation of folly. But neither threats nor allurements, neither contempt nor reproof, could shake his resolution, or weaken his attachment to virtue. He loved God with all his strength and with all his soul. To serve his Creator faithfully in this life, and enjoy him eternally in the next, was the only object of his affections and desires; and rather than go astray the least step from the path of virtue, or run the danger of losing the favour of his God, and the promised reward of bliss, he was ready at any hour to resign his life. Oh! undaunted constancy! Oh! admirable fortitude of soul! The more admirable, because the graces and helps to heaven were not so plentifully diffused upon mankind under the Jewish dispensation, as they are in the law of Christ; examples of perfection were then more rare, and the path to happiness not so clearly marked out, and trodden but by few. Tobias feared God more than the power of the king, or the reproofs of worldly friends; and with unshaken fidelity and perseverance, fulfilled his usual exercises of piety and mercy. Let the like unwearied constancy mark your steps in the path of virtue. Frequently recall to your minds, for your encouragement under difficulties and trials, the example of this holy man, and of other servants of God, particularly of the first Christians, who were exposed, on account of the practice of their religion, to those dreadful persecutions which the infernal enemy of man's salvation raised, and continued for more than three centuries against the Church. Your situation in many respects resembles that of the first professors of Christianity. The slanders thrown upon the Catholic faith in these our days, are little else but a repetition of the calumnies heaped upon it at that early period; except that the authors of them are no

longer heathens, but men who profess to believe in Christianity, and who, it is to be feared, will consequently be less excusable in the divine sight. It is not, however, so much against their slanderous attacks of your faith that I now wish to put you on your guard, as against the less open though more dangerous snare for your virtue, to be met with in the evil example, the sneers, or the ridicule of those who, while they bear the name of Christian, lead unchristian lives; and acting as instruments of the devil in undermining your virtue, will seek to laugh you out of the practice of religion. But, "be ye not afraid of men, who at most can hurt your bodies only; fear ye Him, who hath power to cast both body and soul into hell." Matt x. 28. Impress upon your minds that declaration of your Redeemer, "If any man be ashamed of me and of my words, of him shall the Son of Man be ashamed, when he shall come in majesty to judge the world." But if ye confess him before men, by a steady adherence to his faith and precepts in the practice of your lives, he will confess you before his Father, he will acknowledge you as his true disciples, and confirm your title to the everlasting reward which awaits those who have faithfully followed him. When deluded worldlings attempt to seduce you from the way of virtue, by branding your strict attention to your religious duties with the name of folly, or by ridiculing your piety, arm yourselves against their artful and malicious attacks, by the thought of what will one day be your sentiments at the judgment-seat of Jesus Christ. Oh! how dreadful will be the remorse which will then overwhelm your souls, if you shall be found to have deserted the path of virtue, and voluntarily have consented to your own eternal destruction, through a foolish dread of incurring the displeasure of your fellow-creatures. Learn then, with the good Tobias, to despise both the threats and the allurements of the world, and to pursue with undaunted constancy the practice of virtue, under what-

ever trials and difficulties you may meet with in the faithful discharge of your duty. The servants of God, so far from being exempt from tribulation, are, from the very circumstance of their lives being so directly opposite to those of the generality of men, more certain to be exposed to a greater share of it than others. The trials which in the hand of an all-wise Providence are a scourge to the wicked, bring the virtues of his servants to the highest degree of perfection in this life, and exalt them in the next world to their crown of glory. God nowhere promises temporal peace and prosperity as the portion of those who engage in his service; but, on the contrary, has expressly forewarned them "that all they who would live godily in Christ Jesus, must suffer persecution." While some of the trials that befall the servants of God arise from the malice of the wicked, who are permitted to live, either that they themselves may repent, or that by them the just may be exercised in the virtues of patience and resignation; other tribulations are expressly sent them by the hand of the Almighty, for the perfection of their virtue. Of the latter truth, the history of the holy Tobias is now going to present you with a most edifying example.

Ver. 10. Now it happened one day, that being wearied with burying, Tobias came to his house, and cast himself down by the wall and slept,.....11. And as he was sleeping, hot dung out of a swallow's nest fell upon his eyes, and he was made blind.12. Now this trial the Lord therefore permitted to happen to him, that an example might be given to posterity of his patience, as of holy Job.

The short view, which I have in the preceeding instructions set before you, of the virtues of Tobias, must have impressed you, my beloved brethren, with a thorough conviction of his being truly a just man, whose life was full of good works. True to his character of a servant of God, he presents, in every circumstance of his history, a model of perfection. You

have beheld him from his youth faithful in the observance of the divine laws; carefully shunning the contagion of evil company; sanctifying the most ordinary actions and employments of his life by a spirit of piety, and a recollection of the divine word; bringing up his son in the fear of god; full of charity for his fellow-sufferers, cheerfully exercising the works of mercy towards them during their life, and after their death; in fine, you have seen him generously sacrificing every earthly consideration rather than omit the doing of a good action; and exposing himself to the danger of losing his property and even life itself, rather than not obey the call of charity. His enemies threatened him with death as the recompence of his mercy: his friends accused him of rashness and folly; but Tobias, listening only to the voice of conscience and of duty, and fearing God more than men, continued his exercises of charity, avoiding on the one hand, the neglect of duty from any human respects, and on the other, all wilful and unnecessary exposing of himself to danger, burying the dead in the silence of the night, to prevent his acts of mercy from being discovered by his enemies. Such is a short sketch of the virtuous life of Tobias. Who would not have expected, in return for a life so holy and edifying, to see his days blessed with an uninterrupted course of temporal prosperity? But, my beloved brethren, the reward of the servants of God is not to be looked for in the short duration of their mortal existence. Their recompence is reserved for eternity, where they will reap the fruit of their past fidelity in everlasting and unchangeable bliss. The Saints, placing their whole heart and affections on the good things of a future state, look for humiliations and afflictions as their portion in this world, knowing that they must first learn to suffer with their Redeemer, if they would reign with him in glory.

After many years of a life spent in the faithful performance of every good work, Tobias, while resting

from the fatigues brought upon him by burying the dead, is struck with blindness. The occasion of this affliction in the eyes of worldlings would be viewed as a mere accident, as a thing happening by chance. But the Christian, whose faith teaches him that the same Almighty hand which framed the world, rules and governs it, believes, as a most undoubted truth, that nothing, excepting sin, happens in the universe but by the express order and will of God. There is no such thing as chance: God has regulated and appointed all things from eternity. Even the very hairs of our head are all numbered by him, and not one of them falleth to the ground without his will and permission. The order of his Providence is not confined to us, it extends to the whole of his creatures. Not a blade of grass springs up in the fields, not a leaf moves, nor a branch decays on the trees, but by his divine permission. In whatever, therefore, befalls us, under the severest afflictions and the most disheartening trials, it is not to chance, nor the mere malice of men, that we are to look as the cause of our sufferings; but in these occurrences, no less than in our greatest prosperities, we are to view the hand of that God who ordains and sweetly disposes all things for the good of his servants. This truth, the knowledge of which is of so much consequence, both for our present and future welfare, is clearly pointed out to us, and exemplified in the blindness that befell Tobias. The holy scripture expressly tells us, that the Lord permitted this trial to happen to him for the perfection of his virtue, and that he might shine to future ages, like another Job, a bright pattern of patience and resignation to the divine will. With what admirable humility and submission did the holy Tobias embrace the appointment of heaven! For, says the sacred text:

Ver. 13 Whereas he had always feared God from his infancy, and kept his commandments, he repined not against God, because the evil of blindness had befallen him.....14. But continued immovable in the fear of God, giving thanks to God all the days of his life.....15. For as the kings insulted over holy Job, so his relations and kinsmen mocked at his life, saying;.....16 Where is thy hope, for which thou gavest alms, and buriedst the dead?... ..17. But Tobias rebuked them, saying, speak not so:.... ..18. For we are the children of saints, and look for that life which God will give to them that never change their faith from him.

To what a height of perfection, my beloved brethren, are the knowledge and practice of this truth, that nothing happens but by the order of divine Providence, capable of raising the soul of man! Tobias in his affliction rises superior to human nature, and manifests a virtue worthy of a higher order of beings, a virtue truly angelical. The blessed spirits above know no other occupation than to adore and execute the will of God; and the Saints who are one day to be united with them in bliss, know no other happiness here on earth than to embrace and accomplish the divine will in all its appointments. The consideration of the will of heaven animates them with courage in the hour of trial, covers them with an impregnable shield in the day of danger, lightens their burdens, soothes their afflictions, softens their persecutions, and turns what the world calls misery into a source of merit and of sweet tranquillity here, and of infinite rewards hereafter. Among the ordinary evils that attend the life of man upon earth; we can scarcely conceive a more heavy affliction than that which befell Tobias. The loss of his sight was to him a double distress; it not only prevented him from fulfilling the common occupations of life, but debarred him from exercising his usual works of mercy, in seeking for objects of charity, and in burying the dead. To this severe trial was added another equally, or perhaps more painful, the ungrateful and uncharitable behaviour of those who called themselves his friends. Instead of pouring the balm of consoling

words into his afflicted soul, and endeavouring to lighten his sorrows, they insulted him, they reviled him, and ridiculed his past life of virtue. Void of all true sentiments of piety themselves, they would, if possible, have rooted such sentiments from the breast of Tobias, and thus have deprived him of what was then his only comfort—the testimony of a good conscience as to his past life, and his confidence in the divine friendship and protection. A similar aggravation of his affliction had happened ages before to holy Job, who, when insulted by his friends, and tempted by his wife to blaspheme the God of heaven and put an end to his existence, bore all insults with patience, rejected the solicitations of his wife with horror, and, under the heaviest distress that ever fell to the lot of man, preserved unshaken his fidelity to God, and even blessed and praised the hand that afflicted him. Like that holy man, Tobias, in his blindness, continued immoveable in the fear of God, and the practice of virtue. Unable any longer to exercise his accustomed outward acts of charity, he redoubled the interior homage of his heart to the supreme Being, and dedicated his time to the acceptable duty of praise and thanksgiving for past favours, and fervent supplications for a continuance of divine grace. When his worldly friends, whose hopes extended not beyond the grave, and whose affections were placed solely upon earthly blessings, mocked his past virtues, and insultingly asked him, where was now his hope, and what was the fruit of all the toils and dangers to which he had exposed himself in the path of virtue? The servant of God rebuked them with meekness, saying: “Speak not so; for we are the children of Saints, and look for that life which God will give to them that never change their faith from him.” As if this holy man had said to them: Look at the lives of the ancient patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, whom we call our fathers. Those venerable servants of God, con-

sidering themselves as only strangers and pilgrims on this earth, fixed their hearts on the blessings promised a future state. During their mortal life, the will of God was their only guide in all their actions; in obedience to his will, they cheerfully submitted to the portion of trials annexed to their earthly pilgrimage looking forward to the recompense of their virtue in that eternal life which God will bestow upon those who never lose their faith in him; but with a full confidence in his power and mercy, persevere to the end of their lives in his service.

Such, dear Christians, were the admirable sentiments of piety which animated and consoled the virtuous Tobias in the heavy trial which had befallen him. He submitted with humble resignation to the appointment of heaven, and this submission filled him with present comfort and with future hope. As the glory of God had ever been the object of all his actions, so the accomplishment of the divine will was the object of his desires and affections. By his strict fidelity in the divine service from his youth, he had secured to himself those graces which now enabled him to meet his severe trials with patience, and turn them into a source of everlasting happiness. Ah! cherish then in your souls the spirit of this holy man, and imitate his steady attachment to virtue. Let no human considerations, nor a fear of what the world may say of you, deter you from the practice of virtue. Remember that your business in this life is to serve God. Let his will then be the rule of all your actions. Seek first the kingdom of God and his justice; sanctifying all the employments of your lives by doing them with a view to please God, and to gain eternal life. Consider whatever befalls you as ordained by an all-wise Providence for your good, and be cheerfully resigned to his holy will, even under the greatest crosses and disappointments. Then will you truly love God above all things, when you shall have no other will but his.

This conformity to the divine will, is that charity of which the Apostle says, that "it is the bond of perfection." Tongues shall cease; prophecies shall be made void; faith shall no longer be necessary, when the soul shall see her God face to face; hope shall be swallowed up in enjoyment; but charity, the love of God and of his will, never faileth, but will continue throughout an eternity of bliss, that happy union of will and affection which even in this life subsists between God and his servants. Amen.

SEVENTH HOMILY.

Chap. 11 ver. 19. Now Anna his wife went daily to weaving work, and she brought home what she could get for their living, by the labour of her hands. 20. Whereby it came to pass, that she received a young kid, and brought it home. 21. And when her husband heard it bleating, he said: Take heed lest perhaps it be stolen; restore it to its owner, for it is not lawful for us either to eat or to touch any thing that cometh by theft.

THE servants of God, in a state of affliction and trial, are compared by the holy Scripture to gold in the furnace. For as gold by passing through the fire loses nothing of its own substance, but being by this operation cleansed from every particle of dross that adhered to it, comes forth from the furnace more bright and more valuable than it was before; so, my beloved brethren, the virtues of the Saints receive a new lustre from the persecutions of the world, and the afflictions of this life; are separated from all dross of earthly affection, and are crowned with a much higher degree of merit, as to eternal life. The character of the holy Tobias, which in time of prosperity appeared so edifying, shone forth with much greater splendor, in the afflicting state of blindness and poverty, to which Providence had reduced him. This severe trial stamped his virtues with the seal of heaven, and made it manifest to the world that his good works were not performed from any human motive, or a view to any earthly advantage, but from a pure love of God, and a desire of eternal life. This holy man, who, by the blessing of Providence, and the favour of his earthly sovereign, had lately enjoyed the truly enviable happiness of being enabled to dispense large alms to his distressed countrymen, was now, by the

permission of the same all-wise Providence, reduced to want. The holy Scripture does not inform us by what means Tobias became poor; but his stock of money was exhausted too suddenly to be immediately replaced. It is true, he had lent a considerable sum to his countryman Gabelus; but as he had no longer the liberty of going whithersoever he pleased, he could not at present recover it. In addition, therefore, to the severe affliction of the loss of sight, Tobias found himself forced to struggle with another hardship, that of poverty. The world looks upon poverty as one of the worst of the evils that can befall man in this life. But the Saints, who view things through a very different medium from that in which the followers of the world behold the objects that surround them, withdrawing their heart and affections from all the transitory advantages of this life, fix them upon those eternal blessings which are alone worthy of the soul of man. Casting all their care, as to worldly goods, upon that bountiful God whom they serve, and who ordains all things for the good of his servants, they embrace with equal cheerfulness all the appointments of his holy will, whether as to riches or poverty, prosperity or adversity. If Providence blesses them with abundance, knowing the danger of riches, a fatal source of perdition to thousands, and remembering that they are only stewards of the great and Sovereign Lord of all, they distribute them in acts of mercy to their fellow-creatures, and thus turn the corruptible riches of this earth into solid and never-failing treasures for eternity. Careful not to set their affections upon worldly riches, they use their possessions as if they used them not, preserving their hearts totally disengaged from all misplaced attachment to them, and living in the disposition of being willing to part from them, whenever such shall be the will of Providence. Hence, if the Almighty visit them with poverty, being fully assured that all his dispensations are designed for their future

good, they bow with cheerful submission to the divine will, being confident that he who feeds the birds of the air and clothes the lilies of the field, will provide them with the necessities of this life, more than which they neither ask nor desire. It is thus that the servants of God, under the severest hardships and trials, enjoy a happiness which the followers of the world in vain attempt to find in the attainment of earthly emoluments.

Of the above truths, the conduct of Tobias, during his blindness and poverty, is a striking and at the same time an edifying proof. Though deprived of his possessions, and what was still more valuable, his sight, he murmurs not against heaven, nor loses his confidence in the Almighty, but professes himself a child and a follower of the ancient patriarchs, who looked for their happiness and their reward in a future state.—As Tobias, in consequence of his blindness, was unable to work for his bread, his wife every day strove by the labour of her own hands to support herself and her afflicted husband. What she earned by her employment of weaving cloth during the day, she carefully brought home in the evening. It happened on one occasion that she brought with her a young kid, which she had received either as a part of her pay, or as a present over and above what was the price of her labour. Her husband hearing the animal bleating, said to her, “Take heed, lest perhaps it be stolen; restore it to its owner, for it is not lawful for us either to eat or to touch any thing that cometh by theft.”—Tobias meant not by these words to accuse his wife of the crime of theft; but, fearing lest the poverty to which they were now reduced, might have weakened her principles of honesty, or induced her to accept of a present from some one who had not the right authority to give it, he recalled to her mind the maxims of the divine law, which forbids, not only actual commission of theft, but also all participation in

the fruits of injustice. In the divine oracles there is nothing superfluous. The circumstance now under our consideration, is in its outward appearance trifling and unimportant; but within is full of useful instruction. It serves to give us a much clearer insight into the character of Tobias; it shews us the extent of his virtue, and how deeply the principles of justice and integrity were implanted in his heart. Many of the Jews, indeed the far greater part of them, being what is called carnal-minded, looked no farther than the outward letter of the law of God, either as to its precepts or its promises. As their hearts were fixed upon earthly objects, they observed the ordinances of the law solely with a view to temporal prosperity; and having no better motive to influence them, it is no wonder that they confined their observance of the law to the mere letter of the precept. They carefully abstained from theft, but at the same time indulged without scruple in many other crying sins of injustice; all of them branches of the same crime of theft, and all equally contrary to the love of their neighbour. Provided that their lives were not stained with any of the grosser sorts of crimes, expressly forbidden by the words of the commandments, they were satisfied; they concluded themselves favourites and in this character looked with confidence for temporal riches, as the reward of what they deemed to be fidelity in the divine service. Thus framing to themselves a false conscience, they passed their lives under the influence of its delusive guidance, profoundly ignorant of many of their most important obligations, and consequently living in the constant violation of some of their strictest duties. Nor did the delusion end till death opened the eyes of their souls and they found themselves stationed at that awful tribunal where the actions of mankind are weighed, not in the deceitful scales of human justice, but in the unerring balance of the sanctuary. The acts of virtue upon which they

built their claim to the favour of heaven, having been undertaken from the sordid motive of gaining human esteem or worldly riches, were then found to have received their reward in the applause of men, or the temporal prosperity that had attended their mortal existence. But their imaginary virtues were not admitted as affording any title to eternal happiness, because they wanted that purity of intention, and were not done from that sincere love of God which alone stamps our actions with real excellence, enrolls them in the rank of real virtues, and renders them deserving of eternal life. On the other hand, when the false conscience under which the carnal-minded Jew had acted, was removed, and the divine law appeared to him, not as interpreted according to the suggestions of self-love, but agreeably to the dictates of eternal truth and justice, the violations of duty in which he had lived without scruple would overwhelm him with confusion, and prove his eternal condemnation. Such was the state of the carnal-minded Jew, who looked no farther than the letter of the divine law.

Before I contrast with his conduct the character of the spiritual Jew, or real child of Abraham and faithful servant of God, I conjure you, my beloved brethren, to give me your most serious attention while I point out to you a certain description of Christians, whose condition in many respects resembles that of the carnal-minded Jews. I mean those whose lives are under the influence of the fatal vice of lukewarmness or tepidity. This vice is a rock upon which thousands of unhappy mortals are shipwrecked, whose lives are unstained with any very gross crimes, and consequently appear virtuous and edifying in the eyes of the world. Almighty God declares that he will not accept of a divided heart. Our whole being, both soul and body, belongs to him upon the most just of titles, and he therefore requires that our whole being should be faithfully dedicated to his service. The

lukewarm or tepid Christian, is sensible indeed that he is placed in this world to serve God, and knows that if he does not serve him he must be miserable for eternity. Whatever, therefore, appears to him to be a duty of strict obligation, he carefully performs, and as carefully avoids whatever appears to him in the shape of a mortal sin. Further than this he goes not; but flatters himself that he shall thus be enabled to depart this life in a state of grace, and escape the torments of hell. A fear of these torments, and not a sincere love of God or an ardent desire of eternal life, is the motive upon which he acts, both in abstaining from certain grievous crimes, and in discharging certain duties. As to heaven, it is seldom the object of his thoughts, much less of his affections. He endeavours to link together the service of God and of the world; he indulges self-love in every thing that wears not the outward appearance of a mortal sin; but in order to pursue this indulgence without disquiet or remorse, too often puts a false interpretation upon the law of God, and frames to himself a false conscience, under cover of which he indulges in practices directly opposite to the divine commandments. As mortal sin is the only object which the lukewarm Christian dreads, he looks upon all those faults which he either knows or imagines to be *venial*, as of little consequence, and as being not at all dangerous. For example, knowing that it is a duty of strict obligation to assist on Sundays at the adorable sacrifice of the mass, he would not for the world absent himself from attending on that important duty. But as to the other duties of the Sunday, such as the being present during the sermon, and instructions at catechism, the attendance at the evening service of the Church, the instruction and spiritual welfare of his children and family; these he considers as matters of no great consequence, and as inclination or company suggests to him, omits them either entirely or in part. He makes no scruple

of coming late to the house of God, and thinks nothing of the disrespect which by such conduct he shews to the Deity, and the disedifying example which he sets to his neighbour. He suffers any trifling excuse of business, company, or amusement, to put by the important duty of prayer, and the frequenting of the sacraments at the regular times. In fine, the duties which he does outwardly discharge, his acts of virtue, his prayers, his confessions and communions, are undertaken from such defective motives, so void of a pure intention, and performed in so cold, so negligent, and so distracted a manner, that the merit of them, if it be not totally destroyed, is at least considerably diminished. Divine grace is every day weakened, and the love of God, like a fire that wants a supply of fuel, gradually dies away in his soul. Thus the lukewarm Christian is constantly exposed to fall a prey to the snares of his spiritual enemies. Sometimes indeed he feels himself checked by the reproaches of his conscience, and invited by the inspirations of grace, to greater fervour in the service of God. But being unaccustomed to any great labour or exertion in the path of virtue, he frames to himself a thousand difficulties in the way of perfection. At the same time he fondly persuades himself, that such labour and exertion are not of strict obligation, and after a few weak efforts to shake off the slothful languor that oppresses his soul, he sinks still deeper in his habits of coldness and tepidity in the divine service. Add to this, that the lukewarm Christian, being under the guidance of a false conscience, framed according to the suggestions of a mistaken self-love, often imagines those transgressions of the divine law to be only venial, which are in fact grievous violations of duty; and thus, like the carnal-minded Jews, lives without remorse in the habit of mortal sin, and dies in the same dreadful state. Foolishly relying upon certain exterior good works, he fancies himself rich in merit for

eternal life; till appearing before the judgment-seat of God, he finds himself poor and blind, and wretched, and miserable, and naked. Such, my beloved brethren, is the state of the lukewarm Christian. Can any situation be more truly deplorable, or more dangerous than his? No, believe me, there is no vice more disgusting in the sight of God, nor more dangerous to the soul, than lukewarmness or tepidity. Or, if you will not believe me, believe the declarations of the Almighty himself, whot hus addresses the tepid Christian: Apoc. iii. 14, "I would that thou wert either cold or hot; but because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will begin to vomit thee out of my mouth: because thou sayest, I am rich and made wealthy, and have need of nothing; and thou knowest not that thou art wretched, and poor, and blind, and miserable." Miserable indeed is the lukewarm Christian, doubly miserable, because he is insensible of his wretched condition, and the danger that attends it. Most earnestly then, do I conjure you, my beloved brethren, to shun this fatal snare for your virtue, by animating yourselves to fervour in the divine service, and making the glory of God the end of all your actions. That you may never through ignorance or a false conscience transgress the bounds of duty prescribed by the divine law, do not rest contented with having once learned the obligations of religion from your catechism or the instructions of your pastor. Make the study of religion a daily practice during the whole course of your lives. Seek instruction, by reading each day some pious book, and by diligently attending at the whole of divine service on Sundays and holydays. In each action of your lives, have in view the noble end of your being, and direct every circumstance of your existence to the attainment of that great end, carefully practising the advice of St. Paul: "All things whatsoever ye do in word or in work, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, by uniting the ac-

tions and sufferings of your lives to the merits of his death and passion, and seeking in all things the glory of your heavenly Father." Let the maxims of the divine law be the rule not only of your actions but of your affections, and the desires of your hearts; for in the due regulation of these, Christian perfection and sanctity principally consist. Lastly, sensible of your weakness and corruption, apply to the throne of grace for strength from above, by a diligent use of the means of salvation, prayer and the holy sacraments. Let neither sloth nor business, neither company nor amusement, nor the evil example of tepid and ungrateful Christians, prevail upon you to omit the regular discharge of these important duties. By faithfully practising the above directions, you will daily advance towards Christian perfection. Like the spiritual Israelites, of whom the holy Tobias is so illustrious an example, you will walk not only with fidelity, but with delight, in all the commandments of God, fixing your heart and affections on the happiness of a future state, and embracing with cheerfulness whatever the hand of divine Providence shall appoint for you in your present pilgrimage. Oh! my beloved brethren, what sweet consolations will this your fidelity during life diffuse around your bed of sickness and of death. Enjoying, in the tranquillity of a good conscience, a foretaste of that happiness which is soon to be your everlasting recompense, the near prospect of eternity will fill your hearts with joy. Exulting with the Apostle, you will cry out: "I have fought the good fight, I have kept the true faith, I have finished my course; and now there is laid up for me a crown of glory, which the Lord, the just Judge will render unto me." 2 Tim. iv. 8.

EIGHTH HOMILY.

Chap. II. ver. 22. At these words, his wife being angry, answered: It is evident thy hope is come to nothing, and thy alms now appear.....23. And with these, and other such like words, she upbraided him.

THE subject of my last instruction must have convinced you, my beloved brethren, that the virtues of Tobias were of no ordinary cast, but stamped with a very high degree of perfection. Anxious that all under his care should serve God with the same fidelity as himself, he trained his son in the path of virtue, and recalled to the mind of his wife the principles of the divine law, that no temptation, arising either from the poverty of their circumstances, or the persuasions of others less virtuous than himself, might induce her to transgress the bounds of justice. "It is not lawful," said this holy man, "for us either to eat or to touch any thing that cometh by theft." Anna, whose character was very different from that of her husband, had, by mixing with the world, imbibed a worldly spirit. Instead of receiving with gratitude the well-meant and religious admonition of her husband, she gave vent to passion in bitter reproaches, which not only wounded the feelings of Tobias, but also struck at the wisdom of divine Providence, and manifested a great want of confidence in the Almighty, as well as a miserable deficiency of those religious principles that guided and consoled the heart of her husband. To his kind admonition she replied with sneers: "It well becomes you to entertain such scrupulous nicety respecting the property of others, after having foolishly given away your own. By your indiscreet liberality you have dissipated your own fortune, and reduced your family to want. Where is now the fruit of your

past charities? Is it thus that the Providence of which you have spoken with so much confidence, rewards your services? You will know for the future what reliance to place upon its care and protection." In such impious terms as these did Anna reproach her husband, not only once but frequently, so little had she profited by his holy advice and example. Her insulting and blasphemous language was not the effect of a mere momentary and sudden impulse of anger: it proceeded from a want of divine faith, and from her having adopted the maxims of those carnal-minded Jews among whom she lived; and like whom she was willing to serve God, so long as his service did not call for the sacrifice of any humour, inclination, or worldly interest. This life seems to have been the only object of her solicitude, and to provide for its wants the only motive upon which she laboured for the support of of her family, and not any thought or desire of obtaining a reward in the life to come. Oh! how dangerous a thing it is to love the company of worldlings, and to listen to their discourse. Their maxims, always favourable to self-love and the indulgence of corrupt nature, slide imperceptibly into the heart, and soon undermine the principles of religion and virtue. Faith becomes weak; the truths which it delivers, by degrees, lose their influence; and the soul, almost without being sensible of it, adopts the sentiments of the world as the only rule of its affections, its desires, and its actions. Such, unfortunately, was the effect which too free an intercourse with the world had upon the conduct of Anna, the wife of Tobias. The principles of virtue implanted in her breast by the pious discourse and holy example of her husband, were gradually weakened, and at length almost entirely rooted out. But this will be less a subject of astonishment to us, when we reflect that the wife of Job, many ages before, had furnished a similar example of the danger of communicating with the wicked. The reproaches and

insults which holy Job met with from his wife and pretended friends, were conveyed in nearly the same impious language with which Tobias under his afflictions was assailed by his wife.

It is then necessary for me, my beloved brethren, after these examples, to unfold to you the danger of evil company, and how strict an obligation you are under of avoiding it? Would to God that it were not necessary for me to enter upon this subject! But when I reflect upon the number of young persons, who, notwithstanding their early instruction in piety and religion, have been seduced from the path of virtue, live in a habit of sin, and walk in the road that leads to eternal damnation, and who owe their misfortune to no other cause than mixing with the company of the wicked, I feel it a duty which I owe to you and to my own conscience, to warn you who now hear me of this fatal source of the destruction of souls. It is a most lamentable truth, that the good and edifying example of God's faithful servants, the zealous labours of the Apostles and their successors in the sacred ministry, and the sacraments and sacrifice of the Church, joined to the merits of the death and passion of Christ Jesus, do not procure the salvation of half so many souls as is the number of those who are eternally ruined by the corrupt example of the wicked. The Saviour of the world has indeed pronounced the severest of woes against those who by their scandalous lives draw others into sin, and lead them in the road to perdition. Yet he has also declared, that it is necessary that scandals should come; that there will always be numbers of our unhappy fellow-creatures, who, not content with wilfully consenting to their own damnation, will act as powerful agents of the devil, in corrupting the well-disposed, in withdrawing them from the practice of virtue, and dragging them to everlasting misery. Well does the Apostle St Paul style all such Christians "enemies of the cross of

Christ." The Son of God came down from heaven to save souls; his labours, his preachings, his miracles, his sufferings, and his death, were all directed to the salvation of souls. But the scandalous Christian, he, who bearing the name of a follower of Christ, lives in the violation of the precepts of the Gospel, in the neglect of his religious duties, and the habit of any public sin, makes void the death and passion of Jesus Christ, destroys the very end of his coming among men, and, by his evil example and discourse, proves the eternal damnation of those precious souls for whose salvation the Son of God shed his blood upon a cross. My heart, my beloved brethren, is ready to burst with grief; my blood chills within my veins, when I look at and consider the number of souls that owe their damnation to no other cause, originally, than the seduction of evil company. You would fly with horror from the wretch whom you knew to have been but once guilty of the crime of taking away the corporal life of a fellow-creature; and can you without fear *associate* with those far more terrible murderers who are daily and hourly guilty of murdering the souls of others, by leading them, especially young persons, into mortal sin, teaching them habits of vice, and conducting them the first steps in the road to perdition?

I do not now ask you what will be the sentiments of your soul, if, at the day of God's final judgments upon sinners, some unhappy young persons who have been seduced by your evil example from the way of virtue, shall point to you as the authors of their destruction. But, I ask you, where can you in reason expect that your station at that day will be, if during life you have been linked in bonds of friendship with the worst of God's enemies; with those, who by their irreligious lives and wicked example have brought a scandal upon religion, made void the blood of Jesus, and proved the eternal destruction of souls? Will you not then be classed with the workers of iniquity, and

with them receive your portion in everlasting misery? For, are you not guilty of offering a most heinous insult to the God of heaven, your future Judge, if you associate with those who trample his divine law under their feet? Do you not thus involve yourselves both in their present enmity to God, and in the danger of sharing in their future and everlasting exclusion from presence? When Josaphat, king of Judah, had, for motives of state policy, contracted an alliance with the impious Achab, king of Israel, he was severely condemned by Almighty God for such a connexion. A prophet was commissioned on the part of the Most High, to admonish and reprove him in these terms: "You assist the wicked, and associate with those who hate God, on which account you deserve to be rebuked." 2 kings, xix.

To love God with our whole heart, and at the same time to be fond of the society of those who are hourly insulting him by their crimes, are things totally irreconcilable with each other. However we may flatter ourselves that we are in no danger of becoming corrupted by the company of the wicked, the dreadful experience of thousands that have gone before us ought to convince us, that it is impossible to associate any long time with the wicked without adopting their manners. There is nothing which has so much influence upon the conduct of mankind as example. What powerful effects does the virtuous life of but one faithful servant of God produce upon those who are witnesses of it! How many sinners are by it reclaimed from vice, how many that waver are confirmed, how many just animated to perseverance! But, if this be the effect of the lives of the good, how much more weighty must be the influence of the conduct of the wicked, who by their example invite us to the indulgence of every thing that is agreeable to corrupt nature and a vicious self-love! There cannot then, most certainly, be a more danger-

ous snare for our virtue, nor consequently a more certain sign of its speedy future destruction, than to frequent evil company. Weak and corrupt of ourselves, we are unable, without the aid of divine grace, to do any thing deserving of eternal life. This grace the Almighty promises to us so long as we walk before him with an humble fear of offending him, and carefully shun all dangerous occasions of sin. But to court danger and temptation, is to forfeit all claim to the divine protection, leave ourselves unarmed in the hour of danger, and wilfully consent to our ruin.— Now, among all the dangers and temptations to which we are opposed, there is not any one so great as that which arises from the company of the wicked. As well might you expect to live in the midst of persons infected with the plague and not catch their disorder, as to associate with evil company and at the same time not adopt their vices. “Can a man touch pitch without being defiled with it?” says the wise man.— No, nor can we frequent evil company and escape the contagion of their example. You may, perhaps, persuade yourselves, that you love their persons and not their faults; that you will take care not to join in their excesses, nor imitate their conduct. Fatal delusion! By being frequently in the company of the wicked you will become habituated to scenes of vice, and the constant hearing and seeing of what is contrary to decency and virtue will soon wear off that horror of sin which at present proves your security. Your virtue thus stripped of its guard, will be left open and defenceless; the poison of evil example will work its way insensibly into the heart; you will, almost without perceiving it, adopt the sentiments and actions of your associates; and, at length throwing off all restraint, run headlong with them the career of iniquity. So sensible of this danger were the saints of God, both in the old and the new law, that though they had spent years in the faithful service of God,

and were confirmed in long habits of virtue, they carefully shunned the society of the wicked, lest, by criminally running into danger, they should provoke God to withdraw his supporting grace, and leave them a prey to the snares of evil company. If such was the conduct of the Saints, who were infinitely stronger than ourselves, shall we dare to court the friendship of sinners; and think ourselves safe? Are not we, at least, under an equal obligation of flying from this most dangerous of all the occasions of sin? Yes, my beloved brethren, this obligation is so strict and so important, that the word of God delivers it in various passages, and in the strongest terms. "My son," says the wise man, "if sinners shall flatter thee with their caresses, consent not to them: walk not thou with them, refrain thy foot from their paths." Prov. i. 10, 15. "We charge you," cries out the Apostle St. Paul, "in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly." 2 Thess. iii. 6. "If any man that is called a brother be a fornicator or a drunkard, with such a one do not even eat." 1 Cor. v. "Evil communication corrupts good manners."—1 Cor. xv. Before the Hebrews entered the land of Canaan, Almighty God strictly charged them not to contract any friendship or alliance with the inhabitants of that idolatrous country, lest they should be corrupted by their evil example. But the Jews, forgetful of the divine precept, and following their own evil inclinations, mixed with the idolaters, learned their evil ways, and forsook the worship of their true God. It was through a similar neglect of this important precept of flying evil company, that Solomon, after many years spent in the service of God, lost the grace of heaven, and miserably abandoned himself to shameful lusts and idolatry. If other examples were necessary to impress upon your minds a conviction of the obligation under which you are, of avoiding evil

company, and of the fatal consequences attendant upon a neglect of this obligation, I could cite to you that of the Apostle St. Peter, the great St. Augustine, and thousands of others, who owed their misfortunes to this fatal source of sin, evil company. But I would rather invite you to turn your eyes to the numerous living examples of the fatal effects of bad company. If you yourselves have happily escaped its snares, is there no one among your friends or acquaintance who once walked in the way of virtue, till entering into the company of the wicked, he lost his innocence, and became corrupted like them. Look at the numbers of young persons living in the dreadful habits of cursing, drunkenness, and impurity, and be convinced how fatal an engine of destruction is the company of the wicked, and how strictly every Christian is bound to shun it! Oh! that all parents and masters of families who now hear me, sensible of the obligation which their state imposes upon them, would faithfully co-operate with me in warning the tender souls entrusted to them of this fatal snare, and watch over them to preserve them from the society of the wicked! It is too often owing to a criminal neglect of parents and persons in authority, in not watching with sufficient caution over the conduct of their children, apprentices and servants, that the seeds of vice are sown by evil companions in the minds of young persons; and habits are formed which they never afterwards break off. Be then vigilant in the discharge of your duty; banish from your houses those whose lives are scandalous, and whose vicious example may infect the tender souls under your care. Let all who belong to you be sensible that it is the first wish of your heart to see them faithful in the service of God, and to aid them in working out their eternal salvation. Thus will you most effectually contribute to their sanctification, and at the same time promote your own and their everlasting welfare.

In the bowels of the mercy of Christ Jesus I now address you, the younger part of my audience, who are more immediately exposed to the danger against which I have this day warned you. I conjure you ever to remember your own weakness and to tremble, lest by connecting yourselves with the wicked you should forfeit the divine protection, and learn their evil ways. If you have already had the misfortune to listen to their seductions, and leave the path of virtue, break asunder the bonds which link you to the wicked, and no more frequent their society, or the places to which they resort. It is hard, perhaps you will tell me, to part from those whom you call your friends. But will it be easier to go with them into everlasting flames? Is there any thing that ought to be preferred to your eternal happiness? Has not your Redeemer declared, that we must cheerfully renounce whatever would prove an obstacle in our way to heaven, even if it be as dear to us as a hand or an eye. With what joy did the martyrs resign their estates, their friends, and even their blood, for the gaining of heaven; and how glorious is the crown that now recompenses their sacrifice! Imitate their noble resolution; trample the world under your feet, renounce the company of sinners, and labour to repair past scandals, setting before your eyes the awful scene of the last judgment, in which your station will depend principally upon the choice that you now make of your friends and companions. Oh! what sweet tranquillity will fill your souls when you have once regained the path of virtue! With what confidence will you be enabled to stand before your Judge in the hour of death, and in the day of judgment! The labour is short, the recompense is eternal.

If you have hitherto escaped the seductions of evil company, be more than ever on your guard against this dangerous snare for your virtue. Be extremely cautious in the choice of your companions, carefully

shunning the society of the drunkard, the impure, the swearer, the detracter, and the blasphemer. Seek the friendship of those who live up to the faith which you profess; by whose good example you may be aided and encouraged in the path of virtue, and in whose happy company you may be found at the right-hand of your Saviour, when he shall welcome his faithful servants to a participation of his glory.

NINTH HOMILY.

Chap. III. ver. 1. Then Tobias sighed, and began to pray with tears,.....2: Saying, Thou art just, O Lord, and all thy judgments are just, and all thy ways are mercy, and truth, and judgment..... 3. And now, O Lord, think of me, and take not revenge of my sins, neither remember my offences, nor those of my parents..... 4. For we have not obeyed thy commandments, and therefore are delivered to spoil, and to captivity, and death, and are made a fable and a reproach to all nations amongst which thou hast scattered us.....5. And now, O Lord, great are thy judgments, because we have not done according to thy precepts, and have not walked sincerely before thee.....6. And now, O Lord, do with me according to thy will, and command my spirit to be received in peace: for it is better for me to die than to live.

OF all the trials with which the hand of divine Providence visited the good Tobias for the perfection of his virtue, none seems so deeply to have affected him as the irreligious language and unaffectionate conduct of his wife. Struck with blindness, he submitted without murmuring to this severe affliction; and when reviled by his relations and pretended friends, he answered their insulting railleries with meekness, and kindly admonished them of their duty. But when he heard the person whom of all others he most tenderly loved, and from whom he expected consolation under his sufferings, join with the impious followers of the world in ridiculing his piety, and attacking the goodness and justice of God's providence, his heart could no longer withstand the emotions of grief. He made no reply to the insulting reproaches of his wife, lest he should give occasion to fresh sallies of anger, and be forced to witness another effusion of impiety from her, who, notwithstanding his edifying example, had imbibed the false maxims of her carnal-minded acquaintance. But heaving a deep sigh from a breast

overwhelmed with grief and affliction, Tobias had recourse to prayer as his only consolation in distress. Oh! that all married persons, when in similar circumstances of affliction, when suffering from the reproaches or unbecoming language of the partner of their bed, instead of aggravating their uneasiness by a return of insulting words and unchristian behaviour, would, like the holy Tobias, remain silent till the storm is past, secretly offering their hearts to Almighty God, and imploring light, help, and consolation from above! How many fatal quarrels and dissensions would thus be prevented! how many sources of unhappiness would be dried up! how seldom would peace and harmony be driven from the bosom of families! Besides, this humble endeavour to preserve that agreement which is so essential to the happiness of married persons, never fails to bring down the blessing of heaven upon its exertions; and the prayers, thus offered up in a spirit of meekness and charity, prove an abundant source of grace and consolation to families.

The prayer which Tobias poured forth in his affliction, is an admirable model of that holy exercise to persons in all states and conditions, but particularly to those who are suffering under persecution or distress. He begins his prayer with the most humble acknowledgment of the wisdom and justice of divine Providence, and the inward humility of his soul manifests itself in the sighs and tears which accompany the expression of his grief. Prayer is an homage due from man to his Creator, as the Supreme and Sovereign Lord of the Universe, the beginning and the end of all things. Man, in whatever state we consider him, is strictly bound to humble himself before the majesty of God; to meditate upon the works of his infinite power, wisdom, and goodness; to praise and thank him for his blessings; and to make frequent acts or outward expressions of the love of his Creator. This kind of prayer is what forms the uninterrupted and eternal oc-

cupation of the blessed in heaven, as St. John informs us in the Revelations. At one time, he tells us, that he saw before the throne of God four and twenty elders, having crowns of gold upon their heads, and with them four living creatures, who rested not day and night, but incessantly cried out, Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty, who was, and who is, and who is to come. Then falling down before Him who is seated on the throne, and casting their crowns at his feet, as a confession of his sovereign dominion, and of his being the Author of their happiness, they proclaim him worthy to receive honour and glory and power and wisdom and strength for ever and ever. At another time, the holy Evangelist beholds millions of millions of blessed spirits surrounding the throne of the Lamb that was slain for the sins of men, and singing canticles of joy and thanksgiving to him; while an innumerable multitude, of all nations, and tribes, and tongues, standing before the throne, clothed in white robes, and holding palms in their hands, cry out with a loud voice, "Glory be to our God, and to the Lamb that redeemed us by his blood." Apoc. iv. 4., v. 6.—Such, my beloved brethren, is the constant and only occupation of the blessed in heaven. The great work of the creation of the universe, and the still more incomprehensible mystery of the redemption of fallen man, call forth the incessant and eternal praises of the angels and glorified spirits. And shall we, for whom the Almighty thus exerted the wonders of his Omnipotence, remain unmindful of his goodness, and refuse him the tribute of our adoration, praise, and thanksgiving? Happy indeed are we, if, grateful for his blessings, we pay him the daily homage of our praise, and thus begin upon earth that employment which will hereafter be our only occupation in the company of the blessed!

But, situated as we are in this world, there is another kind of prayer, of still stricter obligation, and still

more necessary for us, and more closely connected with our eternal welfare; I mean the prayer of supplication and petition, by which we apply to the Deity, as the source of all good, for help from above, and for the light and grace that may conduct us safe to our everlasting happiness. This kind of prayer was always necessary for man, even in his happy state of innocence in the garden of Paradise; because prayer alone could secure to him that divine favour and protection which were to preserve him faithful in his allegiance to his Creator, and firm in the path of duty. But since the disobedience of our first parents, prayer is become of infinitely greater obligation and necessity. Fallen from our original excellence, a prey to ignorance and concupiscence, and surrounded by the most artful and malicious enemies, who at every step are planting a snare for our destruction, we are of ourselves totally incapable either of providing for our own safety, of vanquishing our spiritual enemies, or of attaining to the great end of our being—the favour of God here, and the eternal enjoyment of him hereafter. It is He who by his grace must work in us both to will and to do that which is good; on him we depend for light, help, and strength, for present safety and future happiness. There is no truth, indeed, more revolting to our natural pride and self-sufficiency than this great secret of Christianity, viz. our own total inability to do good. But at the same time there is no truth the knowledge of which is so necessary for us, and of so much importance in a spiritual light. “Without me,” says the divine Founder of our religion, “ye can nothing,” John xv. 5.; and his inspired Apostle assures us, that without grace from above we cannot so much as pronounce the adorable name of Jesus in a manner agreeable to God. Thus weak and destitute of ourselves, whither shall we fly for refuge, consolation, and protection? To God, on the wings of prayer. He is omnipotent, and therefore can help us; he is all-

good, and therefore will not refuse to his children the blessings which they ask of his paternal bounty. For, "if you, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father from heaven give the good Spirit to them that ask him." Luke xi. 13.

Prayer then is necessary, because of our total dependence upon the divine bounty for every good gift necessary for our present and future welfare. But this is not the only reason why we are bound to pray. God, who alone can satisfy our wants and necessities, has been pleased to appoint prayer as the ordinary channel for communicating his graces to us. Our wants are indeed known to him long before they are perceived and felt by ourselves, and he could, without our petitioning him, administer the help of which we stand in need. But then we should neither have that thorough conviction of our own entire dependence upon him, nor that sense of his infinite goodness and love towards us, which, during our present state of trial, are necessary to preserve our souls in a proper degree of Christian hope. God, therefore, who is the dispenser of his own mercies, and can fix what conditions he pleases for the distribution of his blessings, has ordained prayer as the means on our part for rendering us deserving of his bounty. "Ask and ye shall receive, seek and ye shall find, knock and it shall be opened unto you." Luke xi. 9. "Pray and, faint not." Luke xviii. 1. Oh! happy necessity, which forces us to a sweet and holy intercourse with our Creator! Happy obligation, which admits us into the secret closet of the great King of Heaven, raises us among the princes of his celestial court near to the throne of his infinite majesty, and opens to us the full hand of his unbounded mercy! If any earthly sovereign were to invite us to come at any hour into his presence, and lay our temporal necessities before him, with a full assurance of lending a favourable ear to our requests, and corres-

ponding with our petitions, should we slight the invitation? Should we suffer ourselves to be easily prevailed upon to wave our claim to the favour and protection of our prince? I believe, my beloved brethren, there is not one of us, who, if honoured with so distinguished a mark of royal favour, would not feel proud of making the world sensible of the high privilege which he enjoyed, and daily embrace with gladness the opportunity which a free access to the person of his prince afforded him, of obtaining relief for himself and his friends. Shall we, then, think less highly of the honour conferred upon us by the King of Heaven, is not only inviting but even commanding us to lay our wants before him? Shall we be less solicitous for eternal blessings than for temporal ones? Shall we slight the gracious condescension of that tender and omnipotent Father, who waits but to behold us imploring his aid in the disposition of humble suppliants, and is ready instantly to shower down upon us the treasures of his grace and mercy? Shall we refuse him the acceptable tribute of our morning and evening homage; a tribute, which, though due to him as our Creator, Preserver, and Sovereign Lord, he never fails to recompense with abundant blessings, temporal and eternal? Ah! my beloved Brethren, how truly provoking and insulting in the sight of God must be the conduct of those who, notwithstanding his invitations, his commands, and his promises, neglect the daily and important obligation of prayer! Yet, how does this criminal neglect now overspread the face of the earth! How few are the families and the individuals that are faithful in the discharge of this duty? Thousands of those among whom we live, rise in the morning without one thought of the bounty of that Being who preserved them during the night from the arrows of death that have fallen thick around them, and have surprised so many of their unhappy fellow-creatures. They hasten to their daily task and occupation without a single act

of homage and adoration of that God who holds in his hand the thread of their existence. Forgetful of their dependence on the bounty of God during the day, they conclude their labours in the same slothful spirit; they retire to rest like the brutes of the field; and though their consciences groan under a load of iniquity, they offer not a single supplication for mercy to their insulted God, whose vengeance they have such just reasons to fear. Even among the better sort of Christians, who are careful to perform some acts of devotion each morning and evening, what slothful indifference is too often observable in the manner of discharging this sacred obligation! How small a portion of time is devoted to the holy exercise of prayer; and of that small portion, how very little is really given to God from a want of that sense of our total dependence on God, and that ardent desire of obtaining his grace here and the enjoyment of him hereafter, which are the life and soul of Christian prayer! Again; how many parents and masters of families, though faithful perhaps in fulfilling the duty of prayer themselves, take no care of those under their charge as to the performance of this obligation, and consequently become responsible in the sight of God for the criminal neglect of prayer, of which their children, servants, and apprentices are guilty, and for the evil consequences, that flow from such neglect! Indeed, my beloved brethren, without entering into any detail of the fatal effects of neglecting the important duty of prayer, it may be said with truth, that to this one neglect alone we may ascribe the ruin of the greater part of the souls that are eternally lost. For, however violent and dangerous may be the temptations to which we find ourselves exposed; however strong and inveterate the habits of vice in which we may have the misfortune to be engaged; however malicious the efforts of our spiritual enemies; prayer, fervent prayer, will remove every obstacle to salvation, will prove both a

sword and a shield in the hour of danger, and will lead us on to the possession of that crown which is promised to the conqueror of sin and death. But to neglect prayer, is to walk naked and unarmed into the midst of foes that are incessantly plotting our destruction; in short, it is wilfully writing the sentence of our own everlasting condemnation. In prayer the Saints of God found their protection from danger, their safeguard in battle, their refuge in tribulation, their consolation in distress. Thus the holy servant of God, Tobias, struck with blindness, deprived of his possessions, ridiculed by his friends, and reviled by his wife, in fine, abandoned by every earthly consolation, flies to prayer for his solace under the sorrows that overwhelmed him, and in prayer finds that comfort and relief which no human aid could have afforded him. He humbles himself under the hand that strikes him; adores the divine judgments, always just and holy in themselves; and bows with perfect submission to the will of heaven. He leaves himself to the disposal of Providence, whose ways he acknowledges are full of mercy, and truth, and justice: full of mercy, because all his chastisements are designed to promote the happiness of his children; full of truth, because in them he fulfils his own declaration, that "he chastises him whom he loves," Prov. iii. 12.; and full of justice, because no man living is without stain in his divine sight, and, consequently, no one is exempt from feeling the effects of sin in the scourges of divine justice. "Thou art just, O Lord, and all thy judgements are just, and all thy ways are mercy, and truth, and judgment." Having thus confessed the justice of divine Providence, Tobias runs with confidence to shelter himself under the wings of its mercy. "Now, O Lord, remember me, and take not revenge of my sins, neither remember my offences, nor those of my parents. For we have not obeyed thy commandments, and therefore are delivered to spoil, and captivity, and to death." Full of humility,

Tobias ranks himself among sinners; acknowledges that his unworthiness was such as might have excluded him from a place in the remembrance of God's mercy. But full also of divine faith, he considers his afflictions as a proof of the kind intentions of his Creator towards him, knowing that the like afflictions had befallen the Saints who had gone before him in the path of virtue. While he confesses himself a sinner, and acknowledges himself and the whole people of Israel to have deserved the vengeance of God by their ingratitude for past favours, he implores heaven to avert its scourges, to forget his own and his people's sins, and to be mindful only of its ancient mercies. Then turning to the consideration of his own state; conscious of his past fidelity in the divine service, and being confident that death would bring him to the happy accomplishment of all his labours, his prayers and his tears, he cheerfully recommends his soul into the hands of his Creator. "And now, O Lord, do with me according to thy will, and command my spirit to be received in peace." Not that this holy man was weary of suffering, or sunk under his afflictions; but considering the dangers that threatened him, from the evil example of the wicked among whom he lived, he feared lest he should be drawn aside from the path of duty, and forfeit the divine favour. Looking therefore upon death as the best security both for his virtue and its reward, he prays for the hastening of the moment of his dissolution, yet with perfect submission to that divine Providence which ordains all things for the good of its servants.—That holy prayer, my beloved brethren, may be your refuge and consolation in time of distress; be faithful in the discharge of this holy duty during your health and strength, and see that all under your charge are regular in the performance of this sacred obligation. Abundant blessings, both temporal and eternal, will be the happy reward of your fidelity.

TENTH HOMILY.

Chap. III. ver 7. Now it happened on the same day, that Sarah, daughter of Raguel in Rages, a city of the Medes, received a reproach from one of her father's servant-maids,.....8. Because she had been given to seven husbands, and a devil named Asmodeus had killed them at their first going in unto her.....9. So when she reproved the maid for her fault, she answered her, saying, May we never see son or daughter of thee upon the earth, thou murderer of thy husbands!.....10. Wilt thou kill me also, as thou hast already killed seven husbands?—At these words she went into an upper chamber of her house, and for three days and three nights did neither eat nor drink:.....11. But continuing in prayer with tears, besought God that he would deliver her from this reproach.

WE are now, my beloved brethren, arrived at a part of the book of Tobias, which unfolds to us many admirable secrets of the conduct of divine Providence towards its chosen servants. At the same time that Tobias in his affliction at Ninive had recourse to prayer as his only consolation, Sarah, another servant of God at Rages, or, as it is also called, Ecbatana, a city of the Medes, having met with a severe persecution, flew to the same holy exercise for refuge and comfort. The prayers, of both these holy persons were heard by Almighty God, because they were presented to him in the same spirit of a lively faith and solid humility. Their petitions were granted, but in a manner very different from what they themselves expected, as the sequel of the history will inform you.

Sarah, the daughter of Raguel, was a virtuous young woman, whose holy life corresponded with the principles of piety in which she had been educated. In compliance with the will of her parents, she had engaged no less than seven times in the married state, but each of her seven husbands had been struck with

death on the first night of his marriage. As they had suffered their hearts to fall a prey to the passion of lust, and the gratification of their passion was the principal motive that induced them to enter into matrimony, Almighty God, to shew the abhorrence which he has of all impurity, particularly in the married state, delivered them up to the power of an evil spirit, "who slew them at their very first going in unto her." How dreadful an example is this of the rigorous punishment with which God will hereafter visit those who either enter into the married state with unbecoming dispositions, or when engaged in it, profane its sanctity by any indecent liberties. Though he no longer displays his visible judgments upon such as provoke him by these crimes, Christians are to remember, that their punishment will be so much the more severe in that future state in which justice will no longer be tempered with mercy. By the untimely end of the seven first husbands of Sarah, Almighty God plainly shewed that they were not worthy of her, and at the same time gives an awful lesson to all young persons, of that purity of heart and intention which he requires from those who enter into the holy state of matrimony. The dispositions necessary to draw down the divine blessing upon a Christian marriage, will come under our consideration in the course of a future instruction.

After the death of her seven husbands, Sarah continued to live with her parents that same life of purity and innocence which had secured her, in so visible a manner, the protection of heaven. On one occasion it happened that she found herself obliged in duty to reprove one of her father's maid-servants for a fault which she had committed. The servant, instead of receiving the correction with humility, flew into a passion, and made use of the most reproachful and insulting language, charging her young mistress with being the murderer of her seven husbands, and calling down the curse of heaven upon her. Sarah, though thus in-

sulted and abused by an inferior, sought no revenge. Like a true servant of God, she considered the hand of Providence in this, as in every other event, sweetly disposing all things for her good. Banishing all thoughts of malice and revenge from her heart, she submits with admirable patience to the persecution of her servant, and seeks for comfort in holy prayer. To perform this holy exercise with greater recollection of spirit, and to pour forth her heart with greater freedom, she withdraws from the noise and conversation of the world, and retires into a chamber in the upper part of the house. There she spends three whole days in the most fervent prayer; and in order to give greater efficacy to her petitions, observes during the whole time a most rigorous fast, taking neither meat nor drink. With tears she implores her God to deliver her from the reproach that had been cast upon her, to clear her from the false accusation of having been the murderer of her husbands; and to avert the curse of barrenness which her servant had called down upon her. It is thus, my beloved brethren, that the Saints of God leave it to the Almighty to be their avenger and deliverer under the calumnies and persecutions which befall them; make it their only study to embrace with the most perfect submission all the appointments of Providence; and to turn their trials and afflictions into so many sources of grace here, and of eternal reward hereafter.

From the prayer of Tobias I took occasion to point out to you the necessity and obligation of that holy exercise; a necessity founded on our total dependence upon God for every good, and on the positive injunction of God himself, who has commanded us to pray as the means to render ourselves deserving of his bounty. The prayer of Sarah, which forms the principal subject of this instruction, presents you with an excellent pattern of the manner in which you are to discharge this holy duty, in order to render your prayer

pleasing in the sight of God, and productive of fruit to your own souls. For it is not every kind of prayer which draws down the blessing of heaven. The prayer which is merely the service of the lips and not of the heart; the prayer which is offered up by the wilful sinner, who remains obstinate in his crimes, or by the worldling whose soul is enslaved to the perishable things of this life, and cares not for the blessings of eternity; all such prayers as these, are a mockery of God, and instead of securing his blessing, provoke his indignation. When you pray therefore, imitate the virtuous Sarah, in carefully banishing the world and its follies from all place in your thoughts; and let your exterior, i. e. the outward posture of your body, bespeak the inward reverence and humility of your soul. Kneeling down as a mark of respect due to the sovereign Creator, begin not your petition till you have deeply impressed upon your mind a sense of the presence of that immense Being who fills the heavens and the earth, before whom you kneel, and whose mercy you are about to implore. It is the advice of the wise man, or rather of the Holy Ghost by his mouth, who says, "Before prayer prepare thy soul, and be not as one who tempteth God." Eccl xviii. 23. If thoughts of worldly business, company, amusement, or the like, present themselves before you when you go to prayer, say to them as Jesus did to his disciples when he entered the garden to pour forth his soul to his heavenly Father, "Stay you here while I go yonder and pray." Shut the door of your mind against all wilful distractions, and bring with you to this holy exercise, a heart truly sensible of the divine presence, and truly desirous to discharge this sacred duty in a becoming manner. There is nothing so necessary in order to pray well, as this recollection of spirit, this thought of the divine presence. But to obtain it and preserve it in your souls, you must not only cultivate this recollection at the times in which you go to prayer: accustom

yourselves to a frequent remembrance of the divine presence during the day; let the whole tenour of your lives be regular; and, above all, avoid giving too much time to dissipation and excess of amusement, than which nothing contributes more to root out the spirit of prayer from the soul. Bringing with you this recollection of spirit to your prayers, you will not only prevent distractions from being voluntary in their origin, but, acquiring a habit of watchfulness over yourselves, you will be powerfully aided in faithfully resisting and removing those involuntary wanderings of the mind, which are inseparable from our present state of frailty and corruption. Having then used your good endeavours to prepare yourselves for the duty of prayer, by recollection in the divine presence, be not disheartened or alarmed at the frequent involuntary distractions which you may experience. Make them a subject of humility, acknowledging in them the weakness of your nature, and faithfully fight against them; then, so far from hindering the fruit of your prayer, they will, by filling you with sentiments of humility, add greatly to the merit of that holy exercise, and draw down an increase of grace.

For, next to this recollection of spirit and sense of God's presence which I have pointed out to you as the first disposition towards praying well, you must be careful to pray with an humble spirit. God hath regard to the prayer of the humble, and he despiseth not their petitions; but the proud he rejects far from him. Kneel before God with a full conviction of your own poverty and unworthiness; sensible that your wants are infinite, and that God alone can give you relief, throw yourselves at his feet. Cry out to him in the sentiments of humility and earnest supplication with which the beggar at your gate entreats an alms from you; for, says the great St. Augustine, with regard to God, we are all beggars when we pray, prostrate before the door of this great Father of the whole

world, with sighs and tears imploring blessings from him. It was in this spirit holy David prayed, Psalm lxi. 6, "I am needy and poor, O God help me;" and the prophet Daniel tells us that his prayers were performed in the same humble disposition; "When I prayed," says he, "I confessed my sins and those of my people Israel, and prostrate on the ground poured forth my prayers in the presence of my God." Dan. ix. 20. In the same humble and contrite spirit, the publican, by a short but fervent expression of humility, supplicated and found mercy, in the forgiveness of his sins.

But this humble sense of your own unworthiness must always be accompanied with a firm confidence in the goodness of God, which is a third condition requisite for rendering your prayers acceptable to God. This is what the holy Scripture calls praying *with faith*; "Whatsoever you shall ask in prayer, if you ask with faith, that is, with confidence in God, you shall obtain it." Matt. xxi. 22. How strong, how lively, how admirable was this faith in those poor distressed objects who are recorded in the Gospel to have drawn near to Jesus Christ for the cure of their temporal infirmities! The woman who had been afflicted for so many years with an issue of blood, says within herself, "If I shall but touch the hem of his garment I shall be healed." Matt. ix. 21. The centurion, after expressing his own unworthiness to entertain his Saviour under his roof, cries out with a full faith and confidence in his divine power and goodness, "Speak but the word, O Lord, and my servant shall be healed." Matt. viii. 8. Shall we then have less confidence when we apply to him for the relief of our spiritual wants? Are his goodness and his power less than they formerly were; or is the arm of his mercy shortened? Has not he himself commanded us to pray, with a full assurance that whatsoever we ask we shall receive, if we ask it in his name? Oh! let us throw ourselves with confidence in-

to the arms of his mercy, let us lay our wants at the feet of our heavenly Father; filled, indeed, with a sense of our own unworthiness, but placing all our hope in that adorable Saviour, who having once by his death purchased every blessing for us, lives always to make intercession for us, and presents incessantly to his eternal Father his bitter sufferings and death, in union with our humble requests, to the throne of mercy.

But you have prayed, and you find yourselves no better for your prayers.—Redouble then your fervour, and persevere in prayer. For, either you have not prayed with those dispositions which I have named to you, *recollection in the divine presence, attention, humility, and confidence*; or the Almighty, in his merciful designs for your good, defers the grant of your petitions, in order that you may pray with greater earnestness and with perseverance, and thus may deserve a great increase of grace. The offering of our prayer, at first insignificant and contemptible in itself, by being many times renewed and repeated, becomes at length valuable, and in some manner proportioned to the blessings which we ask. Hence Almighty God often grants to perseverance in prayer that which he refuses to a first request. Our divine Redeemer, therefore, exhorts us to pray and faint not; and for our encouragement gives us the example of a widow who had for a long time solicited an unjust judge to do her justice but without effect, till at length by her multiplied entreaties, she in a manner forced him to grant her request. But the most admirable pattern of perseverance in prayer, is the Chananæan woman, as related in the 15th chapter of St. Matthew. This poor woman, though brought up amongst idolaters, had heard of Jesus Christ, and conceived a strong faith in him. She applied to him for the cure of her daughter, who was grievously tormented by the devil. At first our divine Redeemer took no notice at all of her request, but remained silent, as if he had no care for

her. The woman not all disheartened, redoubled her cries, till the Apostles, weary of her importunities, begged their divine Master either to dismiss her, or to grant what she asked. The answer of our Saviour was still more disheartening than his silence; "I am sent," said he, "only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." You, therefore, who belong not to my fold, have no claim upon my mercy. But, instead of sinking into despair and giving up her cause, the woman drew nearer to Jesus, threw herself at his feet, and worshipped him, saying: "Lord, help me." Admirable as was her confidence, and fervent as was her prayer, Jesus seemed not to regard it; but coolly replied, "It is not fit to take the bread of children and give it to the dogs." One would have imagined that this answer of our Saviour would have deprived this poor woman of all hope, and induced her to abandon her request; but it serves only to animate her confidence, and redouble her fervour. "Yes, O Lord," she cries out, "it is true; but even the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their master's table." I confess, O Lord, that brought up in idolatry, I am, compared to thy people, as that unclean animal, the dog. I am not worthy to partake of the bread with which thou feedest thy children. But deny me not, O Lord, the crumbs which fall from thy table; give me the blessing which I ask, and which requires not the exertion of that almighty power which thou displayest in favour of thy people, but merely a fragment of thy omnipotent goodness. "O woman," cried out our Redeemer, in admiration at her perseverance, "great is thy faith; be it done to thee accordingly as thou desiredst:" and her daughter was cured at that very hour.

In how admirable a manner, my beloved brethren, has Jesus Christ here unfolded to us the conduct of our heavenly Father. If he grants not our requests when we first present them, it is not because he is either unable or unwilling to relieve us; but it is to impress us more deeply with a sense of our own

nothingness, to animate us with greater faith and confidence in his goodness, to excite us to fresh fervour, and to induce us to perseverance, by which our offerings are rendered more pleasing in his sight, more proportioned to his graces, and more deserving of his bounty.

Mindful then of the unbounded goodness of that Being on whom you depend for every blessing, be instant in prayer; pray and faint not. But be careful, my beloved brethren, to bring with you to prayer the dispositions which I have pointed out to you, as essentially requisite to a good performance of that duty. When you present yourselves as suppliants before the throne of God, apply your whole soul to that holy exercise. Banish all carnal and worldly thoughts from your minds, and think of God alone, and of what you are asking from his bounty. Impress your minds with a feeling sense of the divine presence, and raise yourselves in spirit above all earthly objects to the throne of the Deity. There, prostrate in the most profound sentiments of your own nothingness, pour forth your requests with an humble heart, but with a firm confidence in the goodness of God and the merits of your Saviour. Consider prayer as the most important business of each day of your lives; as that upon which principally your present and future happiness depend. Let no worldly cares, neither business, company, nor amusement, prevent your regular attention to this most important duty, both with regard to yourselves and your families. But in praying, let it be your first concern to seek the kingdom of God and his justice. Your prayers thus proceeding from an earnest desire of eternal life, offered up with recollection, attention, humility, and perseverance, and presented in the name and through the merits of Christ Jesus, will ascend as a sweet odour before God, who will open to you, as he did to his servants Tobias and Sarah, the full hand of his mercy, in the liberal grant of all your requests.

ELEVENTH HOMILY.

Chap. III. ver. 12. And it came to pass on the third day, when she (Sarah) was making an end of her prayer, blessing the Lord,.....13. she said, Blessed is thy name, O God of our Fathers: who, when thou hast been angry, wilt shew mercy, and in the time of tribulation, forgivest the sins of them that call upon thee.

THE holy Scripture has recorded for us the conclusion of the admirable prayer, which Sarah in her distress presented to the Almighty. It is so clear that it stands not in need of any explanation; and, at the same time, is so full of the noblest sentiments of piety, and the most useful instructions, that it is highly deserving of our serious meditation. Sarah, under one of the most severe trials that can befall human nature, that of calumny, being falsely charged with the murder of her husbands, and quite overwhelmed with grief and affliction, blesses God. Confessing him to be the Sovereign Lord of his creatures, and acknowledging that he has a right to do as he pleases with the works of his hands, she finds a source of consolation even in her affliction itself. Nothing can shake her faith in this truth, that the different events of our lives are ordered by an all-wise Providence for our good, nor lessen her confidence in the divine mercy and protection. She knows that the very chastisements of heaven are all tempered with mercy, and that afflictions borne with humble resignation to his holy will, are one of the most excellent means of atoning for sin and disarming God's indignation. Banishing every human consideration, and every earthly source of comfort far from her thoughts, she turns to God alone for refuge, and with her whole heart fixed on the contemplation of his infinite wisdom, power, and goodness, she im-

plores his protection. Penetrated with the most lively sentiments of her own natural weakness, yet full of that confidence which a good conscience never fails to inspire, she offers her fervent prayers for relief to the throne of mercy. Like the good Tobias, fearing her trials might overpower her, and the strength of temptation prevail upon her to quit the path of virtue, she begs of the Almighty with prayers, with fasting, and with tears, either to clear her from the false accusation thrown upon her, or, if agreeable to his will, to withdraw her by death from the contagion of a wicked world, and not suffer her to be even innocently an occasion of sin to others, who might be induced to think that she had been guilty of the horrid crimes laid to her charge.

Ver. 14. To thee, O Lord, (she cries out) I turn my face, to thee I direct my eyes.....15. I beg, O Lord, that thou loose me from the bond of this reproach, or else take me away from the earth.

The examples of the Saints in their conduct under afflictions, preach to us more powerfully than any precepts, of the admirable advantages to be derived from the trials and sufferings which are inseparable from our present condition. Even in the old law, what perfect models of resignation and patience were those holy servants of God, Joseph, Job, David, Tobias, &c. But in the new law, we have the much more perfect example of the divine Founder of Christianity, Jesus Christ himself; who, under the most outrageous calumnies, insults, and cruelties, heaped upon him by his own creatures, even when he was led as a sheep to the slaughter, opened not his mouth; "who, when he was reviled, did not revile, and when he suffered, threatened not, leaving you an example that you may walk in his steps." 1 Pet. ii. 21, 22. He forewarns us not to be surprised if we meet with persecution from a wicked world, since the world persecut-

ed him, our Teacher and our Lord; but, under the sufferings which befall us, to preserve that spirit of meekness and charity which forms the characteristic mark of his true disciples; to seek no revenge, but to leave our cause in the hands of God, who will vindicate our innocence in due time, and to exercise mercy towards our greatest enemies. Thus shall we heap coals of fire, i. e. confusion, on their heads, and prepare for our own a crown of glory. For, "blessed are ye when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and speak all that is evil against you, untruly, for my sake; be glad and rejoice, for your reward is very great in heaven." Matt. v. 11, 12.

Sarah, having humbly acknowledged her submission to the will of heaven; and expressed her confidence in the divine mercy, lays open the secrets of her heart before the Most High, and finds in her past innocence of life the most consoling source of hope in the divine power and protection.

Ver. 16. Thou knowest, O Lord, that I never coveted a husband, and have kept my soul clean from all lust.....*17.* Never have I joined with them that play: neither have I made myself partaker with them that walk in lightness.

Happy are all those young persons, who, like this virtuous woman, can call with confidence upon the God of truth to witness the purity of their hearts; can assert, that they have preserved their souls and bodies free from the defilement of lust, and have carefully shunned the company of those whose words or example might have endangered their chastity! For, of all the snares which the enemy of mankind lays for the destruction of mankind, especially in youth, none proves in his hands so successful a weapon for the ruin of souls, as impurity. This is the vice which deluges the world with iniquity, and fills hell with souls. Were we permitted to take a view of the miserable wretches who are already condemned to that place of woe,

and to see at the same time the cause of their sufferings, I am convinced that we should find by far the greater part of them suffering for some sin of lust. Even in this life the Almighty has frequently executed the severest of his visible judgments, as the holy Scriptures abundantly testify. The universal deluge which drowned all mankind, with the exception of eight persons; the fire and brimstone that consumed Sodom and Gomorrah; and the husbands of Sarah delivered over to the power of the devil, are lasting proofs of the abomination in which God holds all impurity. As none but the clean of heart will be admitted to the presence of his glory; so none but the clean of heart, those whose souls are adorned with chastity, will enjoy in this life the presence of his grace, his favour, and his protection. Every unclean person, whose heart is stained with any of the filthy defilements of lust, is an object of detestation in the divine sight. God withdraws his gifts and graces from such souls, and delivers them, as he did the husbands of Sarah, to the power of Satan, by giving them up to the fury of their passions, and permitting those dreadful effects to ensue, which are the dismal consequences of impurity, viz. a disrelish for prayer and spiritual exercises, a neglect of the sacraments, a hardness of heart, an obstinacy in sin, and that final impenitence which sets the seal to the sinner's eternal reprobation. What numbers of young persons have we ourselves known, my beloved brethren, who once walked in the path of innocence and purity, and promised a life of virtue conducting to an eternity of bliss, but suddenly stopped short in their progress, and were seen gradually to sink into the depth of vice and iniquity. To what fatal snare was this their misfortune owing? Was it not to the detestable sin of impurity; the seeds of which were sown in their yet tender minds, either in those moments when their parents, neglectful of their trust, kept no watch over them in their hours of lei-

sure, sleep, amusement, and company, or when they themselves, thoughtless of danger, ventured into the society of the abandoned and impure? Like the spotless lily, which is sullied by the breath, chastity will not bear the breath of the unclean sinner, but quickly fades before it, and is lost. The only means of preserving the inestimable treasure of purity, are, a diligent attention to those exercises of religion which increase and preserve the innocence of the soul—prayer and the sacraments; and a vigilant flying from the occasions of this sin, more especially from the company of those, who by their evil discourse, immodest jests and songs, or indecent behaviour and improper liberties, are the instruments of the devil in instilling the poison of this vice into the breasts of young persons. The conduct of Sarah is, on this point, an admirable pattern for youth. The care with which she had shunned the company of the unchaste, proved, under God, the security of her virtue; and the consciousness of her past fidelity gave her consolation in her distress, and afforded her a well-grounded hope of the protection of heaven. She calls God to witness, not only that she had kept her heart free from the défilements of lust, but that she had carefully avoided the society of all such as by their levity of behaviour or conversation might have proved a snare to her innocence; and had abstained from those diversions and amusements which are too often the incentives to vice, such as promiscuous dancing, which is particularly signified by the Latin text of this passage—*ludere*. What a reproach is the conduct of this virtuous person to those Christian young women, who, careless of danger, and without choice of company, run with so much eagerness to an amusement, which this faithful servant of God avoided as a rock fatal to innocence! “Never,” says she, “did I join with them that play; neither have I made myself partaker with them that walk in lightness.”

Ver. 18. A husband indeed I consented to take, with thy fear,
not with my lust.

When arrived at a proper age, Sarah entered into the married state, not from any worldly or criminal motive, but, having the fear of God before her eyes, with that uprightness of intention, and with that holy preparation, which always secure the blessing of heaven. A want of these holy dispositions on the part of her husbands, was the occasion of their temporal and eternal destruction. But in speaking of them, Sarah pretends not to inquire into, or to fathom the ways of Providence.

Ver. 19. And either I was unworthy of them, or they perhaps were not worthy of me: because perhaps thou hast kept me for another man.....*20.* For thy counsel is not in man's power...
21. But this every one is sure of that worshippeth thee, that his life, if it be under trial, shall be crowned: and if it be under tribulation, it shall be delivered; and if it be under correction, shall be allowed to come to thy mercy.

Sarah, full of humility, is willing to ascribe the death of her husbands to her own unworthiness, but professes her ignorance of the designs of Providence, whose counsels are placed far above the reach of man's weak understanding. If we are truly animated with the spirit of the servants of God, we shall be content with knowing and acknowledging, as Sarah did, that all the dispensations of God towards his servants are designed for their good. If he tries them in this life, he will reward their fidelity in the next; if he send them afflictions, it is but for a short season; at most, for the continuance of their short lived existence here below, and then death will be to them the entrance into a happiness unchangeable and everlasting. In fine, if he chastise them for their faults, his punishments operate as a salutary medicine, restoring health and vigour to the soul, and drawing down mercy to the humbled penitent. For God, as he himself

declares by his prophet Ezekiel, wills not the death of sinners, but is desirous of their conversion. He is not an enemy that delights in our pain; he is a tender parent even when he inflicts his scourges. He disturbs, the quiet of our souls by raising in them the most alarming apprehensions of his justice, that, awakened to a sense of our danger, we may undertake the work of our repentance, and restore peace to our consciences. He excites in us the terrors and the anguish of a bitter contrition, that, being reconciled to him, we may taste that pure joy which is the fruit of the holy tears that accompany a sincere repentance. In all his dispensations he seeks our good, and in every circumstance of our lives he therefore most justly deserves our heartfelt praise and thanksgiving. Impressed with these sentiments, Sarah concludes her prayer with these words:

Ver. 22. For thou art not delighted in our being lost, because after a storm thou makest a calm, and after tears and weeping thou pourest in joyfulness.....*23.* Be thy name, O God of Israel, blessed for ever.

The holy Scripture assures us, that the prayer of Sarah, like that of Tobias, was accepted of by Almighty God:

Ver. 24. At that time the prayers of them both were heard in the sight of the glory of the most high God.....*25.* And the holy Angel of the Lord, Raphael, was sent to heal them both, whose prayers at one time were rehearsed in the sight of the Lord.

The petitions which these two holy servants of God addressed to him in the same spirit of faith in his power and goodness, and the same humble submission to the orders of his Providence, ascended as a rich perfume to the throne of his mercy, and were presented to him by the ministry of Angels, those blessed "spirits who are appointed to minister for them that shall receive the inheritance of salvation." Heb. i. 14.

The Angels are spirits created by Almighty God for the participation of his own glory, are employed by him in promoting his merciful designs towards us, and destined one day to be our fellow-members in bliss. Their number is countless. The prophet Daniel, and St. John in the Revelations, represent millions of millions of these holy spirits constantly employed in praising and adoring the Author of their happiness, and in executing his will. St. Paul, as above quoted, tells us, that the Angels are the ministers of God, sent by him to exercise their holy office for his elect. It was by the ministry of Angels that the law was given to the Jews, Acts vii; and an Angel, invested with God's authority, conducted his people through the desert into the land of promise. Exod. xxiii. 20. Angels present the prayers of the faithful before the throne of mercy, as the books of Tobias and the Revelations inform us. These holy spirits are sometimes recorded to have been the ministers of God's justice in the punishment of his enemies, as in the destruction of Sodom, the death of the first-born in Egypt, and the slaughter of the army of Sennacherib before Jerusalem. Moreover, it is a truth founded on the words of holy Scripture, and constantly delivered in the writings of the Fathers and the uninterrupted tradition of the Church, that we have each of us an angel appointed by God to be our guardian and protector. Thus in the 90th Psalm, holy David says of those who trust in God, "that He has given his Angels charge over them to keep them in all their ways;" and in the 33d Psalm, ver. 8, he tells us, "that the Angels of the Lord encamp round about them that fear him." Secondly, Jesus Christ himself, speaking of little children, says, "Their Angels who are in heaven, always see the face of my Father who is in heaven," Matt. xviii. 10. Lastly, in the 12th chap. of the Acts of the Apostles, it is recorded, that when Peter was released from prison in a miraculous manner, and repaired to a house where the faithful were

met to pray, they at first thought it was his Angel; which clearly shews that the first Christians believed in the doctrine that each one of the faithful has an Angel guardian. Thus, while the evil spirits are continually plotting our destruction, the good Angels, by the appointment of divine Providence, lend us their powerful assistance, discover to us the snares of our malicious enemies, protect us in the hour of danger, recall to us pious thoughts and past good resolutions; aid us in conquering our passions, overcoming temptations, and vanquishing our enemies; and conduct us safe in our journey through the desert of this life to the land of promise, the heavenly Jerusalem. Oh! adorable goodness of our God, which has provided such admirable means of advancing our happiness! Oh! holy presence of our guardian Angel! how powerfully ought the thoughts of his presence to encourage us in the path of virtue! In every action, in every place, cries out St. Bernard, be mindful that you are in company of your guardian Angel, and offend him not. Do not in his presence that which you would be ashamed to do in mine. The constant recollection of the presence of your guardian Angel will prove to you a most powerful protection against the temptations of lust, and preserve you in that spotless purity, which will always ensure to you the divine protection, as it did to the virtuous Sarah. God received her prayer in her affliction, and sent one of the Arch-angels, or chief spirits of his heavenly court, for her deliverance and that of the virtuous Tobias. Raphael, signifies a physician sent from God. We admire the goodness of Providence in dispatching an Angel for the relief of his servants. Let us not forget, that for our relief, and the cure of our spiritual infirmities, he sent down, not an angel, but his own consubstantial Son, and delivered him up to death for us, "that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and might cleanse us to himself a people acceptable, a pursuer of good works." Titus ii. 3.

TWELFTH HOMILY.

Chap. IV. ver. 1. Then Tobias thinking that his prayer was heard that he might die, called to him Tobias his son,... 2. And said to him, Hear, my son, the words of my mouth, and lay them as a foundation in thy heart.

WE now return to the history of the good Tobias. This holy man, fearing the dangers and temptations of a wicked world, and finding himself, in consequence of his blindness, no longer able to pursue his accustomed exercises of charity, prayed earnestly that he might die, if it were the will of heaven. The holy Scripture assures us, that his prayer was heard by Almighty God, who always accepts the petitions which are presented to him with a perfect conformity to his will. The effect, however, of his prayer was not that which Tobias expected from it. For as the servants of God pray with an entire submission of their own will to the will of Providence, leaving it to Almighty God to ordain what is most for his glory and their good, so God sometimes regards more that humble conformity of their will, than the requests which they actually present to him. He knows that his own glory is the great object of the desires of his servants; if therefore he refuses the immediate subject of their petition, it is only to substitute in its place the grant of some favour more conducive to his glory, and more agreeable to the designs of his mercy towards them. Such was the order of his Providence towards the virtuous Tobias. This holy man, thinking that his prayer was heard, and humbly confiding that God would soon call him to the reward of his labours, began to dispose himself for his departure out of this world.—To prepare for death ought indeed to be the business of our whole lives, and the Saints of God are

careful to make it so, according to the advice of the Spirit of God, "in all thy ways remember thy last things, and thou shalt never sin." But in drawing near to their last moments, the Saints redouble their fervour in the divine service, and are more earnest in setting their house in order to attend the summons of their great Lord, who is about to demand an account of their stewardship. Sensible of the strict account which he should be required to give of the manner in which he had discharged the obligations of a parent, Tobias called to him his only son, whom he had trained in the path of virtue, to complete his destruction, and to impress more deeply on his youthful mind the lessons of piety which were already implanted in his breast. The young Tobias was at this time about twenty years of age. His father, much reduced in his circumstances, had now little else to bequeath him but his virtue. Happy, however, is the parent who on the bed of death can leave such a legacy to his children, confirmed and supported by a life full of good example! And thrice happy are the children, who falling heirs to so rich an inheritance of virtue, cultivate and improve it like the young Tobias! Let us consider the advice which Tobias gave to his son, as addressed to ourselves, and according to the directions of this holy man, treasure it up in our hearts as a solid foundation for a life of virtue.

When his son drew near him in obedience to his call, Tobias, before he began his last instruction to him, gave him directions respecting his own and his wife's funeral in these words:

Ver. 3. When God shall take my soul; thou shalt bury my body: and thou shalt honour thy mother all the days of her life :.....

4. For thou must be mindful what and how great perils she suffered for thee in her womb..... 5. And when she also shall have ended her time, bury her by me.

Though the Saints of God are well assured by divine faith, that God by his almighty power will re-

store them their bodies at the last day, and are therefore little solicitous what becomes of them after death, being willing, if it be for the glory of God, to resign them to the flames, or give their ashes to the winds; yet they do not condemn, but highly approve of the respect which is paid to departed friends, in the careful and decent interment of their bodies. Tobias, therefore, gives directions for his own burial; and, as a pattern of that regard to his wife which he recommends to his son, desires that their bodies may rest in the same grave. Then reminding his son of the affection which he owes to his parents, he exhorts him to honour his mother all the days of her life. "For," says he, "thou must be mindful what and how great things she suffered for thee in her womb." The love and affection which animals bear to those from whom they received their birth, last but for a short duration, till the young are able to supply their own wants; but the love of children towards their parents, is a duty that continues binding until death. Jesus Christ, our teacher and our model, is an admirable pattern in his humble subjection to his blessed mother and St. Joseph, of that filial love, respect, and obedience, which God requires from children to their parents. For all these duties are included in that of '*honour*,' which God enjoins by the words of the commandment. Yes, Christian children, as you hope for the blessing of heaven in this life, and a share in the kingdom of your Saviour hereafter, you are bound, during the whole course of your lives, to imitate his holy example in your conduct towards your parents. To them, under God, you are indebted for the most valuable of all blessings, life itself. What anguish and pain did it cost your mothers to bring you into the world! What toils and labour did your parents endure to support you in your helpless infancy; with what anxiety did they watch over your tender years! And do you not feel in return the most tender and affectionate love and reverence for

them? Oh! as you value your own happiness, attend to the words of the Holy Ghost, (in the 3d chapter of Ecclesiasticus, ver 8,) and faithfully practise them in your lives: "He that feareth the Lord, will honour his father and mother, and will serve them as his masters all the days of his life." "Honour thy father in thy actions, thy words, and in all patience, that he may bless thee, and his blessing may remain with thee to the end.—My son, comfort thy father in his old age, and give him no sorrow during his whole life. If his understanding grow weak, bear with him; and do not despise him because of the advantage which thou hast over him; for the charity which thou shewest thy parent, shall not be forgotten;" that is, God will hold it in remembrance, and will amply repay thee for it.—The Almighty looks with a jealous eye upon the behaviour of children to their parents, whom he has substituted in his own place, to watch over them and provide for them. The holy Scripture is full of the divine promises of blessings, both temporal and eternal, to those children that are dutiful to their parents; and at the same time threatens the severest of judgments for time and eternity upon those who are wanting in the fulfilment of these sacred obligations. Do you then, my dear children who now hear me, in the whole course of your lives, religiously observe the injunctions of that commandment which says, "Honour thy father and thy mother." Shew an inviolable respect to your parents in all your words and actions, carefully abstaining from all harsh unbecoming language towards them. Love them with the most sincere affection, compassionating them in their sufferings, relieving them in their distresses, procuring them comfort both spiritual and temporal, and, above all, daily praying for them. Obey them in all their orders, wherever this obedience would not be contrary to any duty which you owe to God; consult with them in all the principal occurrences and transactions of your lives,

and faithfully comply with their advice and directions. The holy patriarchs, Isaac, Jacob, and others recorded in the holy Scripture, were admirable patterns of these duties, even after they were married and advanced in years. The same fidelity St. Paul recommends to all Christians: "Children, obey your parents in all things, for this is well pleasing to the Lord." But in thus recalling the attention of the children to their obligations, let me remind you, Christian parents, that the fidelity of children in fulfilling their duties depends principally upon your faithfully discharging the important trust reposed in you. Like the good Tobias, train them up in the way of virtue, teach them to abstain from sin, and, above all, give them an edifying example of obedience to the commands of God and his Church. Then, like that holy man, you will be blessed with a family whose virtues will be a source of enjoyment to you during life; a solace in your declining years, and one of your sweetest consolations in the hour of death. To succeed in this truly important affair, impress upon the tender minds of your children that great truth which Tobias carefully inculcated to his son, as the ground-work of his instructions, viz. a continued sense of the presence of God.

Ver. 6. All the days of thy life, (said this good man to his son,) have God in thy mind: and take heed thou never consent to sin, nor transgress the commandments of the Lord our God.

For one of the best preservatives of virtue, and consequently one of the best means of preventing sin, is, to have God always in our mind; to think of him in all our ways; to adore him in all the orders of his Providence; to meditate daily on his holy law; to consult his will, by prayer, in all our undertakings; and to consider his adorable eye as ever beholding us; that thus we may be careful never to transgress his law, not from the influence of a servile fear of punishment, but moved and guided by a filial love of him, our tender

and indulgent Parent, and placing our greatest happiness in fulfilling his holy will. Where is the wretch who would wilfully fly in the face of his Creator, profane his name, call down his curses, defile himself with beastly drunkenness, or those more filthy impurities which he seeks to conceal in the darkness of the night from the eyes of his fellow-creatures, did he at the moment behold the all-seeing eye of that God who searches the reins and the hearts, and to whom nothing is invisible, looking down upon him, and the arm of his justice stretched out against him? Oh! that while I am recalling to your minds this salutary truth of the Omnipresence of God, I had a voice that could penetrate into the remotest corners of the earth, and the most secret haunts of sinners, and impress every one with a feeling sense of the presence of the Deity! May you, at least, my beloved brethren, be mindful of this truth in every circumstance of your lives, and be you careful to instil it from the earliest years into the minds of your children!

After inculcating to his son this great foundation of the fear and love of God, Tobias imparts to him most excellent advice for the practice of the important duty of giving alms to the poor. He first acquaints him with the obligation of exercising this branch of fraternal charity, and then encourages him to the fulfilment of it, by pointing out the advantages which it produces to the soul.

Ver. 7. Give alms out of thy substance, and turn not away thy face from any poor person: for so it shall come to pass that the face of the Lord shall not be turned from thee.....*8.* According to thy ability be merciful.....*9.* If thou have much give abundantly, if thou have little, take care even so to bestow willingly a little.

To relieve the distresses of our fellow-creatures, and to afford charity to those who stand in need of it, is a duty of strict obligation, pointed out to us both by the law of nature and the gospel. God, who is

the common Father of all mankind, has bestowed upon some of his creatures a greater share of temporal blessings than he has given to others, that those whom he has thus blessed may imitate his bounty, and acting as faithful stewards of him the Sovereign Lord, may deserve from him an eternal recompense in heaven, by faithfully contributing to the support of those whom his Providence has placed in a more dependent situation. But, lest man, blinded by avarice and passion, should forget this to be a point of duty and obligation, and should look upon it as a matter of free choice, Almighty God, both in the Old and New Law, has made it a positive precept; declaring to us, that the neglect of it provokes God to inflict his severest judgments in this life, and entails upon the soul eternal damnation in the world to come. Our divine Redeemer, in the parable of the rich glutton, Luke xvi. and still more clearly in the account of the last judgment, gives us to understand, that our sentence of endless happiness or everlasting misery depends chiefly upon our fidelity or neglect in fulfilling the precept of giving alms. Matt. xxv.—Every one, therefore, who has the goods of this world, is strictly bound to employ a part of them in relieving the wants of others. To neglect this, the Holy Ghost declares is a certain proof that the soul loves not God. “If any one,” says the beloved disciple, St. John, “has the goods of this world, and, seeing a brother in want, shuts up his bowels against him, how is it possible that the love of God should abide within him? Let us not love them, in word only and in tongue, but in deed and in truth.” Imitate, my beloved brethren, in this point, the conduct of the first Christians, by making, as they did, charity a part of your duty on the Lord’s day. In the primitive ages of the Church, on every Sunday, a collection for the relief of the poor was made from all who assisted at divine service. To prevent the confusion which often attended such collections, the practice

was afterwards adopted of fixing in chapels and churches a box, called the Poors' Box, into which the faithful might, without disturbing one another, put the offerings of their charity, to be employed by their pastor in the relief of the distressed. Never, therefore, leave the house of God on Sundays without adding at least one penny to the property of your poor brethren. Besides this, be in the disposition of mind to administer relief to every one as far as lies in your power, according to the advice of Tobias, "turn not away thy face from any poor person." Every distressed fellow-creature has a claim upon our charity, and whenever we meet with such an one, if we are able we should give him an alms. If it lies not in our power, through our own poverty, to afford him temporal relief, we must never turn away our face from him with any contempt or harsh language, but manifest a pity and compassion for his distresses, and signify at least our good will towards him.

After shewing the obligation of charity to the poor, Tobias lays down the best rule that can be given for the satisfying of it: "Be merciful according to thy ability." What would be sufficient in one person for the fulfilment of this duty, would not suffice in another. "From him to whom more has been given, more will be required." Whatever we possess more than is necessary for our support and that of our families, is to be considered as entrusted to our care for the relief of the necessitous. If then we have much, we must bestow in proportion; if little, we are still to spare a little with cheerfulness of heart, "For God loveth a cheerful giver." 2 Cor. ix. 7. It is the misfortune of the greater part of those who possess worldly riches, that they measure their wants, not by the calls of nature, but the cries of avarice, luxury, ambition, and worldly pomp; and hence too often persuade themselves, when invited to the exercise of charity, that they have nothing to spare. In this they are unjust

stewards; and however exemplary their lives may have been in other points, this waste and misapplication of their Lord's goods and their neglect of the poor members of his family, will prove to them, as it did to the rich glutton, their condemnation to everlasting flames.

"Be ye then merciful according to your abilities." This is the rule of Christian charity, a rule from which no one is exempted however poor. For mercy consists, not only in giving money or meat and drink to such as are in distress, we shew mercy when we contribute in any way to the temporal or spiritual welfare of our neighbour, in giving him good advice, in comforting him under his afflictions, in procuring his conversion from the ways of sin, in advancing him in the path to salvation, in praying for him, and in forgiving the injuries which we meet from our fellow-creatures. These are acts of charity of the highest order, which it is in the power of every one to perform, at least in some one or other of the branches which I have here mentioned.

Mindful then, my beloved brethren, of the account which, at the hour of death, you must give of your stewardship, let it be the daily business of your lives to dispose yourselves for it by a strict fidelity in the fulfilment of all your obligations. Walk always as in the presence of that God who filleth the heavens and the earth, and who holds in his hand the thread of your existence. Embrace with joy the opportunities which heaven affords you of opening to yourselves the treasures of its grace, by the faithful exercise of the works of mercy; thus making to yourselves "friends of the mammon of iniquity, that when you fail, they may receive you into everlasting mansions." Luke xvi. 9.

THIRTEENTH HOMILY.

Chap. IV. ver. 10. For thus thou storest up to thyself a good reward for the day of necessity.....11. For alms deliver from all sin and from death, and will not suffer the soul to go into darkness.....12. Alms shall be a great confidence before the Most High God, to all them that give it.

THE holy Tobias, having inculcated to his son the duty of giving alms to the poor according to his ability, encourages him to be faithful in fulfilling this obligation, by setting before him the great spiritual advantages which are derived from the practice of this branch of charity. Indeed, if God had not made it a *precept* of his holy law, that we should relieve our distressed fellow-creatures, the *advantages alone* which flow to us from the exercise of this virtue ought to induce us religiously to practise it. The measure of God's mercy towards us will be proportioned to the mercy which we have shewn to our neighbour. "Give, and it shall be given to you; for with the same measure that you shall measure to others, it shall be measured to you again." Luke vi. 38. It is then most undoubtedly true, that he who gives an alms, reaps a much greater benefit than he who receives it; so pleasing is charity in the divine sight, so powerful in moving God to bestow his mercies and blessings.

In exhorting his son to the practice of this virtue, Tobias advises him never to turn his face from any poor person, "for," says he, "so it shall come to pass that God will not turn his face from thee." In the eye of that Almighty Being, we are all poor and indigent; infinitely more so than the poorest object upon earth that solicits relief from us. The wants and necessities of our souls are innumerable, and none but God can relieve them. Should he then in his wrath,

turn away the countenance of his tender mercy from us, what would become of us? Deprived of his all necessary aid, destitute of succour from him, and void of the rich treasure of his grace, our souls would have no other prospect before them than misery, temporal and eternal. What more powerful motive then can we desire for the practice of charity to our fellow-creatures, than to be assured by Almighty God himself, that this is the certain means of securing to ourselves the favourable regards and the kind assistance of his mercy? Borne on the wings of charity, our prayers mount without opposition to the throne of the Deity, and open to us the treasures of his mercy. "Break thy bread with the hungry, and invite the needy into thy house; when thou shalt see one that is naked, clothe him. Then come and cry to the Lord thy God, and he will hear thee." Isaiah lviii.

But, my beloved brethren, the giving of alms according to our ability, not only draws down the mercy of God in this life, and inclines him to lend a favourable ear to our prayers; Tobias assures us, that the faithful practice of this virtue will store up for us a rich treasure and a great reward for the day of necessity. That day is the day of judgment, the day of the final distribution of God's justice, when he will render to each one according to his works. Then shall the earthly and perishable goods, which we have put into the hands of the poor, be transformed into heavenly and eternal treasures. When the hand of death shall have stripped us of our worldly riches, and nothing shall remain to us but our works, which will accompany us to the tribunal of our Judge, then shall we behold again in the hands of our divine Redeemer, whatever we have given to him in the persons of his poor members. For Jesus Christ, that same all merciful Saviour, who for our salvation clothed himself with the infirmities of our nature, suffered so many indignities, and so cruel a death on the cross, declares,

that whatever we do to the poor, he considers as done to himself, and as such will recompense it when he shall appear as the Sovereign Judge of angels and of men. "Amen, I say to you, as long as you did it to one of these my least brethren, you did it to me."

In the third place: "Alms deliver from all sin, and from death, and will not suffer the soul to go into darkness:" that is, into eternal damnation. When the haughty Nabuchodonosor was threatened by God with the severest judgments, in punishment of his pride, the prophet Daniel gave him this advice: "O King, redeem thy sins by alms-deeds, and thy iniquities by relieving the poor." Daniel iv. 24. Not that the giving of charity to the poor can alone and of itself cleanse away the guilt of sin and confer the grace of justification. No, my beloved brethren, God is not a corrupt judge that can be bribed by presents. But if the sinner, however enormous his guilt may have been, entering into sentiments of sincere compunction, and sighing under the load of his iniquities, joins to his prayers and contrition the exercise of frequent acts of mercy to the poor, his alms, thus accompanied with the dispositions of true repentance, will most powerfully plead for mercy, and draw down the grace of a sincere conversion. Thus alms are of the highest advantage to every description of persons; to the sinner they prepare the way for his conversion, and render his desires of repentance efficacious; to the true penitent they are the most excellent means of redeeming his past sins; and to the just they serve as an expiation of those smaller stains from which none, however holy, are exempt, and as a means of obtaining the grace of perseverance to the end in the path of virtue.

Lastly, my beloved brethren, "alms shall be a great confidence before the most high God to all them that give it." The same divine oracles which tell us, that judgment without mercy shall be passed upon such as have not shewn mercy, moreover assures us, that our

best security for mercy in that awful moment when we shall be summoned before the Sovereign Judge, will be the acts of charity and mercy which we ourselves have sent before us to his tribunal. This is particularly true of those works which tend to promote the glory of God, the advancement of religion and piety, and the salvation of souls. Such works as these, in that day of calamity and misery when the heavens and earth shall be consumed by fire, and the sinner, trembling at the left-hand of the Judge, shall in vain call upon the hills to cover him and hide him from the wrath of God, will inspire confidence and hope, will disarm the anger of our Judge, and cover a multitude of sins,

Be ye then merciful, according to the ability with which God has blessed you. But in performing the duties of charity, seek not the applause of men; have always in view, as the end of all these and your other acts of virtue, solely the glory of God, and the gaining of eternal life. For it is only to acts of charity performed with this pure intention, that the spiritual advantages and blessings which I have mentioned, are promised by Almighty God.

After these admirable lessons of charity, Tobias earnestly exhorts his son to fly from all impurity.

Ver. 13. Take heed to keep thyself, my son, from all fornication, and beside thy wife never endure to know a crime.

Oh! that in directing the same advice to you, my beloved brethren, I could be ensured that it would be as religiously followed by you, and attended with the same happy fruits in each member of that dear flock whom Providence has entrusted to my care! Sensible of the dreadful havock which the devil makes among Christian souls by the filthy vice of impurity, fortify yourselves against all its assaults by fervent prayer, by earnest watchfulness, by a constant sense of the presence of God, by carefully flying the company and

the resorts of the lustful, by frequently meditating on your last end, and, above all, by cultivating in your souls the most profound humility. For impurity is very often the punishment of pride, as the apostle St. Paul plainly inculcates in his Epistle to the Romans, chap. xi. ver. 22. speaking of the heathens, he says, "professing themselves to be wise, they became fools; God gave them up to the desire of their heart, to uncleanness, to dishonour their own bodies among themselves. For this cause God delivered them up to shameful passions, receiving in themselves the recompense that was due to their error." Knowing that pride opens the door of the heart to the passion of lust, and that humility is the best guardian of purity, Tobias continues his advice to his son in these words:

Ver. 14. Never suffer pride to reign in thy mind or in thy words, for from it all perdition took its beginning.

Pride is the worst and the deepest of all the wounds caused in the soul of man by the disobedience of Adam. It is so implanted in our corrupt nature, that utterly to destroy it is almost impossible. To fight against its suggestions, to weaken its power, and to prevent it from ruling over our thoughts, words, and actions, is the daily employment marked out for us in our mortal existence. To succeed in this task, we must ever cherish in our minds the opposite sentiments of Christian humility: meditating often on our own nothingness, on our ingratitude to God, and the uncertainty that hangs over our future lot; behaving with mildness and affability to all; despising no one, however inferior to ourselves; and bearing, in a spirit of meekness, the frailties, imperfections, and even injuries of our fellow-creatures. Faithfully attending to these principles as our guide, we shall triumph over this subtle enemy, which is indeed the root of evil. For pride was the occasion of the eternal destruction both of Angels and of men; pride was the parent of sin

and hell. It is at the same time the first and the greatest of all sins, and that which God holds in the greatest abhorrence, because it strikes directly at his sovereign majesty and infinite perfections, claiming to itself the excellence and the glory which belong to him alone. Yet, so inherent is pride in our very nature, since the fall of Adam, that we are at each moment in danger from some one or other of its mortal wounds, unless by a constant watchfulness and by cherishing in our breasts a solid humility, we provide ourselves with an antidote against its deadly poison.

Ver. 15. If any man hath done any work for thee, immediately pay him his hire, and let not the wages of thy hired servant stay with thee at all.....*16.* See thou never do to another what thou wouldst hate to have done to thee by another.

Such are the lessons Tobias gives his son to regulate his conduct towards his neighbour. To do to others as we wish them to do to us, is the abridgment of all the duties of brotherly love enjoined by the gospel. It is a rule extremely simple in itself, but very extensive in its obligations. With this rule all our thoughts, words, and actions, that regard our conduct towards our fellow-creatures, will one day be compared at the judgment-seat of Christ. Do you then, my beloved brethren, make this maxim the invariable rule of your behaviour towards others, that you may avoid that dreadful confusion and severe condemnation which will one day befall those who by their frauds, their injustices, their rash judgments, their calumnies, and their detractions, shall stand charged with having violated this grand principle of fraternal charity. As to those persons whom you employ to work for you, strictly fulfil the injunction of holy Tobias to his son, by paying them their hire when it is due. To do otherwise, to keep back unjustly the wages of the labourer, is a crime so contrary to justice and charity, that it is declared in holy writ to be one of those more

enormous sins which cry to heaven for vengeance in this life, over and above the eternal condemnation which is the ordinary punishment of grievous transgressions. "Behold," says St. James, v. 4. "the hire of the labourers, who have reaped down your fields, which by fraud has been kept back by you, crieth: and the cry of them hath entered into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth." Tobias thus proceeds:

Ver. 17. Eat thy bread with the hungry and the needy, and with thy garments cover the naked.....*18.* Lay out thy bread and thy wine upon the burial of a just man, and do not eat and drink thereof with the wicked.

Tobias here alludes to a custom which prevailed among the Jewish people, of making an offering at the tombs of their departed friends. The offering consisted of bread and wine, or other meats, which, after being laid upon the tomb of the dead person, were distributed among the poor, to procure their prayers for the departed soul. Tobias, however, takes care to inform his son, that these prayers could be of no service to the wicked, who die enemies of God, in a state of mortal sin, but only to the just, who depart this life in the grace of God, but with some lesser stains upon the soul, which may be expiated by the charities and prayers of the living. Christianity teaches the same doctrine; and in the records of every country that has received the light of the Christian religion, we find that the custom of praying for the dead introduced and established as a part of the faith delivered by Christ and his Apostles. St. Irenæus expressly mentions this custom in the second century; and the great St. Augustine tells us, in his confessions, with what earnestness his pious mother on her death-bed besought him to remember her soul in the sacred mysteries, and with what reverential care he fulfilled her devout request. Tobias, in recommending his son to observe this pious practice, common among his

countrymen, of bestowing charity in behalf of the dead, charges him to invite to these repasts such only as fear God and lead a life of virtue, lest these feasts of charity should degenerate into excess and drunkenness.

Ver. 19. Seek counsel always of a wise man.

This is another important lesson which Tobias delivers to his son. The Holy Ghost, by the mouth of the wise man, (Eccles. xxxii. 24.) gives the same advice: "My son, do nothing without counsel, and thou shalt not repent after thou hast done." In effect, we cannot entertain too great a mistrust of our own lights and prudence. This diffidence in ourselves should lead us to embrace with gladness the opportunities of improving ourselves by the knowledge and experience of others, by asking advice, particularly of those whom God has appointed our spiritual guides, the pastors of the Church. If we are faithful on our part in thus seeking direction from the prudence of others, God will not fail to put into the minds and the mouths of those whom we consult, the sentiments and the advice necessary to promote our welfare. In short, it is he who speaks to us by the mouth of those prudent persons with whom we advise; upon him therefore principally we are to rely for guidance and direction. It is what holy Tobias tells his son in the very next verse:

Ver. 20. Bless God at all times; and desire of him to direct thy ways, and that all thy counsels may abide in him

Oh! how many admirable lessons of piety, how many great and important obligations are included in these few words! Bless God *at all times*; be always mindful of him in your hearts, in the midst of the hurry and employment of the day, during the repose of the night, in affliction and in prosperity, at all times and in all places bless God, by making him the end of all your actions, and performing them all to his glory.

In all your ways implore the guidance of his holy spirit, consult his will in all your undertakings, relying not upon your own lights and prudence, but upon that wisdom and knowledge which he never fails to infuse from above into the breasts of those who put their whole confidence in him and truly seek his glory. Thus placing yourselves under the guidance of his Providence, you will, as Tobias assures his son in the conclusion of his advice, have nothing to fear from the malice of your enemies, however low and apparently wretched your condition may be.

Ver. 23. Fear not, my son, said that holy man; we lead indeed a poor life, but we shall have many good things, if we fear God, and depart from all sin, and do that which is good.

The fear of God, innocence of life, and an humble conformity to the will of Providence, are a treasure far surpassing all the contemptible riches of this earth, making the soul a pleasing dwelling-place and abode for the God of heaven during this life, and adorning her with those spiritual riches that will procure her admission into the glorious mansions of never-ending felicity in the life to come.

FOURTEENTH HOMILY.

Chap. IV. ver. 21. I tell thee also, my son, that I lent ten talents of silver, while thou wast yet a child, to Gabelus, in Rages, a city of the Medes, and I have a note of his hand with me:.... ..22. Now therefore inquire how thou mayest go to him, and receive of him the aforesaid sum of money, and restore him the note of his hand.

IN the three preceding homilies, I have unfolded to you, my beloved brethren, those admirable lessons of instruction which Tobias, thinking, in consequence of his blindness, that he was about to die, imparted to his son as his last advice. That holy man, having thus fulfilled the most important part of his obligation as a parent, in providing for the spiritual welfare of his child, completes his preparation for death, by giving proper directions for the settlement of his temporal concerns. This is a duty which every parent, possessed of any property, owes to his family. Moreover, it is a duty which Christian parents should take care to discharge, as Tobias did, while yet their health and understandings are good, and not neglect it till sickness and the near approach of death scarce leave them the use of their faculties, or till the moments allotted to this task can ill be spared from the more important concern of disposing their souls for judgment. A good Christian who lives in the constant expectation of his last summons, and in a daily preparation for it, will be careful, by making his will during health and strength, so to dispose of his temporal affairs as to satisfy the duties of justice and charity. Tobias, as I have before observed, is in this respect a model for Christians. During his prosperity, he had lent his kinsman Gabelus his sum of ten talents of silver, to assist him in providing a proper maintenance for his

family. The sum was considerable, and apparently was all that remained to Tobias of his former affluence. Judging it, therefore, to be a duty which he owed to his family to recall that sum of money, and knowing that his kinsman, by his success in business, was able to repay it, he desires his son to look out for a guide, under whose care he may safely undertake a journey to Gabelus's house, and at the same time gives him directions how to recover the money. The young Tobias, trained up in the path of obedience, cheerfully complies with his father's wishes.

Chap. V. ver. 1. Then Tobias answered his father, and said: I will do all things, father, which thou hast commanded me.....2. But how I shall get this money I cannot tell: he knoweth not me, and I know not him: what token shall I give him? Nor did I ever know the way which leadeth thither.

The young Tobias meant not, by these questions and observations, to detract from the assurance which he had given his father of his readiness to comply with his injunctions; but, foreseeing the difficulties which he might have to encounter, with the greatest prudence he respectfully opens his mind to his father, and solicits his advice.

Ver. 3. Then his father answered him, and said: I have a note of his hand with me, which when thou shalt shew him, he will presently pay it.....4. But go now, and seek thee out some faithful man, to go with thee for his hire; that thou mayest receive it while I yet live.

The young Tobias had started two difficulties which presented themselves to his mind; the one, how he should make himself known to Gabelus, the other, by what means he should discover the road that would conduct him to his kinsman's house; his father removes the first difficulty by telling him, that Gabelus, a man of strict honour and integrity, as soon as he shall see the note, will immediately acknowledge his own handwriting and pay the money; and to obviate the second

difficulty, relating to his journey, advises his son to seek for a faithful guide to conduct him.

Ver 5. Then Tobias going forth found a beautiful young man, standing girded, and as it were ready to walk.....6. And not knowing that he was an angel of God, he saluted him and said: From whence art thou, good young man?.....7. But he answered, Of the children of Israel. And Tobias said to him: Knowest thou the way that leadeth to the country of the Medes.....8. And he answered: I know it; and I have often walked through all the ways thereof, and I have abode with Gabelus our brother; who dwelleth at Rages, a city of the Medes, which is situate in the mount of Ecbatana.....9. And Tobias said to him: Stay for me, I beseech thee, till I tell these same things to my father.

As soon as the young Tobias had with modesty and prudence proposed the difficulties which he apprehended from the long journey that he was about to undertake, and had received his father's instructions how to proceed, he lost no time in complying with the wishes of his parent. Ready obedience always draws down the blessing of heaven upon itself. The world laughs at the humble simplicity with which the Saints follow the directions of those whom God has placed over them, and ridicules this part of their conduct as the emblem of a weak mind. But the wisdom of this world is folly before God, and while he conceals the wonders of his Providence from the proud and self-conceited, he unfolds them to the humble and the little ones, who, diffident of themselves, seek light and counsel from above. No sooner had the young Tobias, in obedience to his father's advice, set out in search of a guide, than he meets with one, in the outward appearance of a man, but in reality an Angel deputed by divine Providence in reward of his obedience, to conduct him on his journey and administer the blessing of heaven to himself and his parents. How admirable is the goodness which God manifests towards his faithful servants! With what tender care does he watch over them! Truly, he regards them as the

apple of his eye; as the hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, he extends the protecting wings of his Providence over those who trust in him, and gives his angels charge over them to keep them in all their ways. Ps. xc. His infinite goodness and love for us, not content with rendering the visible creation subservient to our wants and necessities, has appointed the spirits that surround his throne, the inmate of his heavenly court, to attend upon us in our pilgrimage through this life of temptation and trial, and to exercise their ministry in favour of those who are heirs of salvation. Heb. i. 14.

It is not necessary, my beloved brethren, to repeat here what I have delivered to you in a former instruction as the doctrine of the Church of Christ, respecting the offices and employments of the holy Angels as far as regards this world in which we live. Every book of the inspired writings teaches us, that Angels were employed by Almighty God as the instruments of his merciful designs, both towards his whole people and towards the individuals who are recorded as his more faithful servants. On the occasion at present under our consideration, the Angel sent by God to watch over the young Tobias, took the appearance of a young man of the people of Israel, an appearance under which Angels are frequently mentioned in Scripture, clad as a traveller, and on the point of undertaking a long journey. Tobias meeting him, accosted him in an affable manner, and asked him whence he came? He replied, that he was of the children of Israel, and was well acquainted with the road to *Magas*, and knew personally his kinsman *Gabelus*. In all this reply of the Angel, there is nothing but what is conformable to the strictest truth, since Providence had clothed him with the shape, the countenance, and outward appearance of the person whom he represented himself to be, whose name he assumed, and whom he might with perfect propriety call himself;

till he had fulfilled the part which in that character Almighty God had allotted him. The young Tobias was overjoyed at meeting so opportunely with a fellow-traveller. Yet he did not suffer his joy to get the better of his prudence, or the respect which he owed to his father; but, resolving to do nothing without his parent's advice, desired the young man, as he took him to be, to stay while he communicated his good fortune to his father.

Ver. 10. Then Tobias going in, told all these things to his father. Upon which his father, being in admiration, desired that he would come in unto him.....11. So going in, he saluted him, and said, Joy be to thee always.

Tobias, on being informed by his son that he had met with a proper guide, well acquainted with the road which he was going and the kinsman whom he intended to visit, felt a double emotion of pleasure, arising from his joy at the good news, and his admiration at the kindness of Providence. He immediately invited the young stranger to his house, who, coming in, addressed the good old man in the salutation usual among the Jewish people; "Joy, or peace, be to you." Inward peace of soul, and the spiritual joy attendant upon it, are the greatest blessings we can look for on this earth. Happy, indeed, is that soul which feels this peace within herself, conscious of her own faithful endeavours to walk in the way of God's commandments, having all her affections and passions in proper subjection, and breathing a spirit of peace and charity towards every fellow-creature! This three-fold peace Jesus Christ bequeathed as his last and best legacy to his disciples; and when he sent them to convert the world, he appointed them the harbingers of peace, enjoining them, into whatever house they entered to implore for it the same heavenly blessing: "Into whatever house ye shall enter, say first, peace be to this house." Luke x. 5. His Church, guided by the

spirit of her divine founder, directs her ministers in visiting the sick, to make use of the same pious salutation, "Peace be to you."—Tobias, when he heard this salutation addressed to him, not knowing as yet who the stranger was, thought that the joy which the young man wished him, might be a mere human joy, such as worldlings seek in the pursuit of earthly pleasures.

Ver. 12. And he (Tobias) said: What manner of joy shall be to me, who sit in darkness, and see not the light of heaven?

This holy man had resigned himself with the most perfect submission to the will of God under the severe affliction of his blindness. The holy Scripture testifies that he murmured not, but gave thanks to God all the days of his life. In his reply, therefore, to the angel on this occasion, he signifies, that, as heaven had deprived him of that faculty upon which worldly pleasure so much depends, he had bid adieu to earthly joys and had fixed his desires of comfort on the solid happiness in a future state, which he trusted would be the reward of his cheerful submission to the appointments of Providence. We can hardly imagine a more severe trial than that which had befallen Tobias in his blindness, and he himself seems, by his reply to the Angel, to have been fully sensible of the weight of his affliction: "What manner of joy shall be to me who sit in darkness, and see not the light of heaven." Yet, on the other hand, guided by that solid virtue which chastens and keeps within proper bounds the feelings of nature, he bears his affliction, not only without murmuring, but with interior joy.

If it be so great a misfortune to be deprived of the sight of our bodily eyes, how much more dreadful an evil is it to be deprived of the light of the soul, which is no other than God himself the eternal light, without whom all within us is darkness and death itself! Such is the unhappy state of every soul that is in a state of

wilful sin. Ah! how many are there thus spiritually blind, yet insensible of their unhappy condition! Pray for all such, my beloved brethren, I conjure you by the bowels of the mercy of Christ Jesus; pray that God will send some one of his Angels, that is, his ministers, to work their cure, as he sent his angel for the relief of Tobias.

Ver. 13. And the young man said to him: Be of good courage, thy cure from God is at hand.

Tobias having mentioned his affliction, the Angel consoles him with the assurance that God is about to remove the cause of it, by restoring his sight. To this the holy man, as he did not yet know that it was an Angel who addressed him, made no reply, but resolved with perfect resignation to await the dispositions of divine Providence. He proceeds to make the necessary inquiries respecting the guide who had offered to conduct his son.

Ver. 14. And tobias said to him: Canst thou conduct my son to Gabelus, at Rages, a city of the Medes: and when thou shalt return, I will pay thee thy hire.....*15.* And the Angel said to him, I will conduct him thither, and bring him back to thee. And Tobias said to him: I pray thee, tell me, of what family, or what tribe art thou?.....*17.* And Raphael the Angel answered: Dost thou seek the family of him thou hirest, or the hired servant himself to go with thy son?.....*18.* But lest I should make thee uneasy, I am Azarias, the son of the great Ananias.....*19.* And Tobias answered: Thou art of a great family, but I pray thee, be not angry that I desired to know thy family....*20.* And the Angel said to him, I will lead thy son safe, and bring him to thee again safe.....*21.* And Tobias answering, said, May you have a good journey, and God be with you in your way, and his Angel accompany you.....*22.* Then all things being ready that were to be carried in their journey, Tobias bid his father and mother farewell, and they set out both together.

In the questions which Tobias put to the angel Raphael, whom he thought to be in reality that which he was in appearance, a young man of the race of

Israel, this holy man was not prompted by an idle curiosity, but an earnest desire of providing for the welfare of his son, by entrusting him in the hands of a person on whose prudence and virtue he could rely. The Angel, to remove his anxiety, tells him his name, that is, the name of the person whom Providence had appointed him to represent, and who appears, by the satisfaction which his name gave to the good Tobias, to have been one of this holy man's acquaintance. Satisfied that the guide who had offered his services might safely be entrusted with the care of his son, Tobias implores the blessing of heaven upon their journey, and prays that his good Angel may accompany them on their road. His prayer had already been heard and anticipated by the bounty of God. The attendance of the angel Raphael on the young Tobias, is an emblem of the invisible assistance afforded us during our mortal pilgrimage by the Angels appointed by Providence to guard us. Hearken then to the words which God addressed to his people in the desert, and consider them as directed to each of you: "Behold I send my Angel before you, to guard you in the way, and to lead you into the promised land. Respect his presence, and despise him not, for he is invested with my authority." Exod. xxiii. 20.

FIFTEENTH HOMILY.

Chap. V. ver. 23. And when they were departed, his mother began to weep, and to say: Thou hast taken the staff of our old age, and sent him away from us..... *24.* I wish the money for which thou hast sent him, had never been.....*25.* For our poverty was sufficient for us, that we might account it as riches, that we saw our son.

THE character of Anna, the wife of Tobias, was as I have before observed to you, my beloved brethren, very different from that of her husband. Tobias, animated by a true spirit of religion, views the hand of God in every circumstance that befalls him; and, anxious only for the fulfilment of the divine will, relies with confidence on the protection of that Almighty Being who never forsakes those who put their trust in him. On the other hand, Anna, guided by a worldly spirit, and acting from the impulse of the feelings of nature, studies the gratification of her own will, is disheartened at the least difficulty, is out of humour at every little trial, and frets at the dispositions of divine Providence, because she looks no further than present enjoyment, and considers not that the momentary tribulations of this life are designed to work for us an eternal weight of glory in the life to come. In this her want of faith and confidence in the goodness of God, Anna has but too many imitators among Christians, who by their murmuring and impatience under the trials which Providence in its mercy ordains for their spiritual good and the exercise of their virtue, lose all the merit of their afflictions, and make them a source of real misery, both temporal and eternal. Anna, who, on a former occasion, had complained so much of the evil of poverty, now murmurs and is uneasy because she is for a short time deprived of the sight of her son, though divine Provi-

dence had given her such plain proofs that her son was under its holy care and protection, and though his journey was undertaken with a view to remove that very poverty. Tobias seeing her affliction, endeavours to console her by instilling into her breast the same holy sentiments of piety which governed his own heart.

Ver. 26. And Tobias said to her: Weep not, our son will arrive thither safe, and will return safe to us, and thy eyes shall see him.....*27.* For I believe that the good angel of God doth accompany him, and doth order all things well that are done about him, so that he shall return to us with joy.....*29.* At these words his mother ceased weeping, and held her peace.

Though the holy Tobias did not yet know that the stranger who had offered to conduct his son was actually an Angel of the Lord, yet, from the circumstances which had transpired, he was satisfied that his son was under the special guidance of Providence, and that God would depute one of his holy Angels to direct his steps. These sentiments of Tobias clearly demonstrate that the faith of the ancient servants of God, who preceded the Christian dispensation, respecting guardian Angels, was the same as that of the Catholic Church of Christ. What love and gratitude do we not owe to the infinite goodness of our God who has provided such powerful aids for our weakness, and such admirable helps for us in our journey through the desert of this life! What profound reverence and respect ought we on every occasion to manifest towards that guardian Spirit who is appointed by divine Providence to conduct us safe through the perils of our mortal pilgrimage, to inspire us with holy thoughts, to warn us of danger, to assist us with good counsel, to remove from us what might injure our virtue, and to point out to us, and lead us in, the path to eternal life! Let us faithfully imitate the young Tobias in receiving with gratitude the succours of our invisible guide, in listening with docility to his holy counsels,

and in faithfully following his heavenly directions. Let us ever make it a part of our morning, noon, and evening devotions, to implore a continuance of his protection. The assurance which Tobias gave to his wife, that their son was under the protection of God's holy Angel, imparted comfort to her, and dried her tears. The holy Scripture then proceeds to recount for us the journey of Tobias in the following manner:

Chap. VI. ver. 1. And Tobias went forward, and the dog followed him, and he lodged the first night by the river of Tigris.....
 2. And he went out to wash his feet, and behold a monstrous fish came up to devour him.....3. And Tobias being afraid of him, cried out with a loud voice, saying: Sir, he cometh upon me.....4. And the Angel said to him: Take him by the gill and draw him to thee. And when he had done so, he drew him out upon the land, and he began to pant before his feet.....5. Then the angel said to him: Take out the entrails of this fish, and lay up his heart and his gall, and his liver for thee: for these are necessary for useful medicines.....6. And when he had done so, he roasted the flesh thereof, and they took it with them in the way: the rest they salted as much as might serve them till they came to Rages the city of the Medes.....7. Then Tobias asked the Angel, and said to him: I beseech thee, brother Azarias, tell me what remedies are these things good for which thou hast bid me keep of the fish.....8. And the Angel answering, said to him: If thou put a little piece of its heart upon coals, the smoke thereof driveth away all kind of devils, either from man or from woman, so that they come no more to them.....9. And the gall is good for anointing the eyes in which there is a white speck, and they shall be cured.

That same Almighty Being who created the universe, is the Sovereign Ruler of it, and governs it as he pleases. To promote the designs of his infinite power, his wisdom, and his mercy, he renders all things subservient to his will. Sometimes he makes use of even the meanest and most insignificant of his creatures, for the purpose of conferring the greatest of his blessings upon man. Of this truth, the sacraments of the Christian Church are a clear and astonishing proof. In one of them (Baptism) he gives to simple water, by the power of his word, the efficacy of

cleansing the soul from the foul stain of sin, adorning it with the brightest ornaments of grace, and raising it to the dignity of a child of God, heir of heaven, and joint-heir with Christ. In another of these sacred institutions, (the holy Eucharist,) God, with a truly admirable love, employs the lowly elements of bread and wine as the instruments of producing in our souls the most excellent of all the operations of his infinite power and goodness, an union with him our God and Saviour. In the Gospel, Jesus Christ is recorded to have made use of clay mixed with spittle, for effecting the cure of a man who had been born blind: On another occasion, he orders Peter to cast his hook into the sea and draw out the first fish which he should take, to open its mouth and take out of it a piece of money which he should find there. It is thus that God at the same time displays his own omnipotence and confounds the pride of man, making use of the simplest of his creatures for bringing about those ends which man, with the utmost exertion of his talents and abilities, could never accomplish. The portion of Scripture which I have chosen for your present instruction, informs us, that at the very same time when Tobias went to the river Tigris to wash his feet, a monstrous fish, by the order of Providence, made its appearance, and came towards him. Tobias was at first alarmed, and called out to his guide for protection. The Angel quieted his fears, bidding him lay hold of the fish without the least alarm, and draw it on shore. He did so, and the fish after beating itself about for some time, expired at his feet. The Angel then let him know, that divine Providence had sent this fish, partly as a provision for his journey, and partly as a protection from the snares of the devil, and for the cure of his father's blindness. It is not for us to search into the ways of Omnipotence, and ask why God acts in this or that particular manner or how the gall of this fish could prove a remedy for

blindness, or its heart and liver chase away evil spirits, and allay the heat of concupiscence. Let us content ourselves with adoring the wonders of the Almighty, and with knowing that it pleased God on this occasion to make use of these humble instruments of his power and mercy in confounding the power of the proud infernal spirit, and in promoting the happiness of his own faithful servants.

Ver. 10. And Tobias said to him (the Angel): Where wilt thou that we lodge?.....*11.* And the Angel, answering, said: Here is one whose name is Raguel, a near kinsman of thy tribe, and he hath a daughter, named Sarah, but he hath no other son or daughter beside her.....*12.* All his substance is due to thee, and thou must take her to wife.....*13.* Ask her, therefore, of her father, and he will give her to thee.

The young Tobias, learning from his guide that he was now drawing near to the end of his journey, began to inquire where himself and his companion were to lodge. The Angel, in satisfying him upon this question, took occasion to open to him some of the secret dispositions of divine Providence in his favour, telling him that he should lodge at the house of his relation Raguel, and that he should marry the daughter of his kinsman, and inherit his property. For according to the Mosaic law, if a parent had no male issue, his daughters inherited his possessions, but with an obligation of marrying a person of their own tribe and family. Tobias was no stranger to the history of Sarah, Raguel's daughter, as appears from his answer to the Angel, when he had mentioned the subject of marriage to him. For,

Ver. 14. Then Tobias answered and said: I hear that she hath been given to seven husbands, and they all died: moreover, I have heard that a devil killed them.....*15.* Now I am afraid lest the same thing should happen to me also: and whereas I am the only child of my parents, I should bring down their old age with sorrow to hell.

The miserable and untimely death of Sarah's seven husbands, who, in punishment of their lust, had been

delivered by the justice of God to the power of an evil spirit for destruction, had reached the ears of the young Tobias, and filled him with terror. Not knowing as yet the cause of their unhappy end, he trembled lest the same fate might befall himself; and being ever alive to the most tender feelings of filial affection, he feared lest by a similar misfortune he should overwhelm his aged parents with affliction, and bring down their grey hairs with sorrow to the grave. The holy Scripture uses the word *hell* in three different significations, generally as meaning the place of eternal misery, but sometimes, in the sense of the word grave; or, at other times as the place of rest, in which the souls of the ancient Saints were detained until the accomplishment of the redemption wrought by Jesus Christ. In either of the latter significations it may be understood in the present portion of holy writ.

Ver. 16. Then the angel Raphael said to him: hear me, and I will shew thee who they are over whom the devil can prevail.....

17. For they who in such manner receive matrimony, as to shut out God from themselves and their mind, and to give themselves to their lust, as the horse and the mule, which have not understanding, over them the devil hath power.

Tobias having mentioned his fear of asking Raguel's daughter in marriage, in consequence of the dreadful fate of her former husbands, the Angel gives him to understand that their miserable death was the punishment of their lust, and of the criminal dispositions with which they entered into the state of matrimony. The sin of lust, which is in all its branches and in every state of life so abominable in the sight of God, is the peculiar object of his hatred and of his vengeance, when committed by married persons in direct violation of the sanctity of their state. God himself is the author and institutor of marriage. He was pleased at first to appoint it as the means of continuing to the end of time a race of beings, who, gifted

with an immortal soul capable of rising to the knowledge and love of him their Creator, might form a constant succession of his true adorers and faithful servants. The glory of God is therefore the end of marriage, and his will is its rule. Whatever, either in the intention with which persons enter into marriage, or in the use of marriage, is not referred to this end, or is not directed by this rule, is irregular and vicious, and sometimes even highly criminal. In marriage every thing is honourable, every thing is holy, if we consider it according to the design with which God instituted it. Much more is it holy, if we consider it in the dignity to which Jesus Christ has raised it as a sacrament of the New Law, and as a mysterious sign of the indissoluble union which subsists between Jesus Christ and his chaste spouse the Church. Such is the light in which St. Paul represents it (Ephes. v. 23.), and the Church makes use of the same terms in conferring the nuptial benediction, in order to impress upon the minds of her children the holiness of disposition with which they should enter the married state. To engage in that sacred state with no other intention than that of satisfying a base and carnal passion, is to imitate the horse and the mule, who, being void of understanding, know no other rule than the momentary impulse of nature; it is prostituting one of the most sacred institutions of the Deity, and voluntarily delivering oneself to the power of the devil, like the seven first husbands of Sarah, for eternal destruction. But, alas! my beloved brethren, how small is the number of young persons, who, entering into the state of matrimony, are careful to banish from their souls every unbecoming motive of carnal passion, worldly interest, and the like! How few, by a pure intention of God's glory, and of having a family; whom they may bring up in the fear and love of God; by watchfulness over their conduct, and by frequent and fervent prayer, endeavour to draw down the bles-

sing of heaven upon their marriage! How few among those, who are already married, live up to the holiness of their state and sanctify the use of marriage by a holy intention, and by abstaining from all actions contrary to the end for which it was instituted! Unhappily the greater part of those who engage in matrimony, either by unguarded conduct before-hand, or by having no other ends in view when they enter into matrimony than the gratification of their passions, or by unbecoming liberties afterwards, shut out God from their hearts, draw down a curse upon themselves and their families, and are too often given over to the power of the devil. But do you, dear Christians, to whom I am now addressing myself on so important a point of duty, give ear to the lessons which the Angel addressed to the young Tobias respecting his marriage.

Ver. 18. But thou, when thou shalt take her, go into the chamber, and for three days keep thyself continent from her, and give thyself to nothing else but to prayer with her.....19. And on that night, lay the liver of the fish on the fire, and the devil shall be driven away.....20. But the second night thou shalt be admitted into the society of the holy Patriarchs.....21. And the third night thou shalt obtain a blessing, that sound children may be born of thee.....22. And when the third night is past, thou shalt take the virgin with the fear of the Lord, moved rather for love of children than for lust, that in the seed of Abraham thou mayest obtain a blessing in children.

Some part indeed of the Angel's advice to Tobias, understood literally, regarded that holy young man in particular, and consequently is not meant to apply to others; such as the abstaining for three nights from the consummation of marriage, the burning of the liver of the fish, and the like. But what is spiritually meant by this part of the Angel's advice, is applicable to all Christians who engage in marriage; that they should take care to enter that holy state free from the violence of passion, and consecrate to God their first union by a pure intention, an upright desire and holy prayer; that as Tobias by burning the liver of the fish drove

away the devil, they should carefully banish all carnal desires, destroy the power of concupiscence, by a pure motive of the love of God, and by fervent united prayer implore his blessing upon their union, both for themselves individually, and the fruit of their marriage. The Angel exhorts Tobias to take the virgin with the fear of the Lord. These few words point out a rule for the use of the marriage-bed. This use is holy and lawful whenever it is accompanied by the fear of the Lord, that holy fear which excludes from the heart and intention every thing that would offend Him who is infinite purity and holiness. Let not married persons deceive themselves by imagining that, because they are married, every thing which passion suggests is lawful. To think thus, is to be ignorant of the very first principles of religion. The end of marriage is, as I have shewn you, the glory of God and the generation of children. Whatever is opposite to this end in the conduct of married persons, is a horrible crime; a profanation of their holy state. Whatever does not tend to this end, is in itself irregular and displeasing before God. Nor are married persons exempt from sin, if they seek for the mere satisfying of carnal pleasure in the use of marriage, rather than the fulfilment of the end for which it was instituted. Would to God, that all married persons were impressed with a due sense of the holiness of their state, and the duties which it imposes upon them! But, alas! how little are these duties known; how seldom are they thought of; and, consequently, how few are the marriages which are accompanied with the blessing of heaven! How great is the number of those which have an evident curse entailed upon them, both for time and eternity!—A the state of marriage is that which the greater part of mankind embrace, it is most undoubtedly true, that the happiness or misery of a great proportion of mankind, depends upon the manner in which they engage in it. Sensible of this truth,

I earnestly conjure you to whom I now address myself, ever to bear in mind the holiness of that state, and the end for which it was instituted. If you are already engaged in matrimony, endeavour to make yourselves acquainted with every branch of the truly important duties of your state, and carefully abstain from whatever is contrary to the holy use of marriage. If you are looking forward to that state of life, have chiefly in view the glory of God, and the sanctification of your souls; be watchful over all your conduct, especially when in company with those for whom you entertain an affection, and take care that no unbecoming thought, desire, or action, stain the purity of soul, or shut the door of your heart against the grace and love of God. By fervent prayer, by faithfully following the advice of your director, and by frequenting the holy sacraments, secure the benediction of heaven upon your undertaking. Thus will you share in the blessings which the Angel promised to Tobias; viz. the devil shall be driven far from you; your name shall be enrolled with the names of the holy patriarchs, as inheritors of the divine blessing, and heirs of eternal life; and lastly, the blessing of heaven shall extend to the fruit of your marriage, and shall communicate itself to your children, who, blessed with soundness and health of body, and with virtuous dispositions of soul, shall prove a source of joy and comfort to you during life, and at the last day shall enter with you into the possession of that eternal bliss which God has promised to those who, like Abraham, faithfully serve and adore him.

SIXTEENTH HOMILY.

Chap. VII. ver. 1. And they went in to Raguel, and Raguel received them with joy.....*2.* And Raguel looking upon Tobias, said to Anna his wife: How like is this young man to my cousin?.....*3.* And when he had spoken these words he said: Whence are ye, young men our brethren?.....*4.* But they said: We are of the tribe of Nephthali of the captivity of Ninive.....*5.* And Raguel said to them: Do you know Tobias my brother? And they said: We know him.....*6.* And when he was speaking many good things of him, the Angel said to Raguel: Tobias, concerning whom thou inquirest, is this young man's father.....*7.* And Raguel went to him, and kissed him with tears, and weeping upon his neck, said: A blessing be upon thee, my son, because thou art the son of a good and most virtuous man.....*8.* And Anna his wife and Sarah their daughter wept.

TOBIAS and his heavenly guide on their arrival at the house of his kinsman Raguel, with whom the Angel had told him that they should lodge, is received with that hearty welcome, and those outward marks of joy, that plainly designated the inward satisfaction which Raguel felt in discharging the duties of friendship and hospitality. A cheerful countenance adds greatly to the weight of a favour; while, on the other hand, coldness of behaviour, and a seeming reluctance in exercising an act of friendship or benevolence, take away a great part of the merit as well as the value of a kind action. It was the saying of a heathen philosopher, that he who gives readily and cheerfully, confers a double favour: "*Bis dat, qui citò dat.*"—in directing us to fulfil the obligations of kindness and benevolence towards our fellow-creatures, the holy Scripture mentions cheerfulness as one of the dispositions that should always accompany such actions. "*God,*" says St. Paul, "*loves a cheerful giver.*" "*Use hospitality,*" says St. Peter, "*one towards another, without murmuring. As every man hath received grace,*

ministering the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God" 1 Peter iv. 8, 9. Moreover, in exercising friendship and hospitality towards either friends or strangers, we must not only banish all coldness, murmuring, and seeming reluctance, we must be careful not only to avoid all sordid or worldly motives from such actions, but sanctify them by a pure intention of pleasing God. In them we perform one of the most common, though at the same time one of the most amiable duties of brotherly love. It was thus that the holy Tobias, his kinsman Raguel, and the great father of these and the other servants of God among his chosen people, Abraham, exercised the duties of benevolence, friendship, and hospitality, towards their fellow-creatures. Raguel, as soon as the Angel and Tobias entered his house, received his visitors with joy; though he did not yet know who they were, or whence they came. Listening only to the dictates of a kind and benevolent heart, he gave them a truly hospitable reception. In the countenance of the young Tobias he discovered a resemblance of his own virtuous relation, the elder Tobias; for whom he appears to have entertained not only the affection of a friend, but a very high degree of veneration, on account of his great virtues. As soon, therefore, as he had welcomed the strangers to his house, he asked them whence they came, and hearing that they came from Ninive, and belonged to the tribe of Nephthali, he enquired after his old and virtuous friend Tobias, whom he called his brother, that is, in the language of Scripture, a near relation. Being told that his visitors were well acquainted with that holy man, Raguel could no longer refrain from expressing his sentiments of esteem and veneration for him. He spoke with admiration of his virtues, saying many good things of him, and passed a high encomium on his holy life and edifying conduct.

See, dear Christians, the force of good example,

how widely its influence spreads, how great is its efficacy, and how admirable its fruits! Though Tobais was, in comparison with many others, an obscure individual, the fame of his virtues had reached his brother captives at a very great distance, and no doubt many were influenced by his holy example to lead a life of piety, to bear their afflictions with resignation, to despise the world, and to consecrate their lives to the practice of virtue. "*To every one,*" says the wise man, "*hath God given charge of his neighbour.*" Wisdom. And while, on the one hand, we are bound to abstain from whatever in word or action might prove an injury to our neighbour, especially as to his soul; we are, on the other hand, under a strict obligation of endeavouring to promote his spiritual welfare and salvation, at least by holy example and pious conversation. That there is nothing which has so powerful an influence on the conduct of mankind as example, every one who pays the slightest attention to what daily passes in the world must be fully convinced. Alas! what more successful engine does the devil employ for the destruction of souls, than the evil example of the wicked. Like a torrent unrestrained in its devastating course, evil example sweeps down every thing before it, and not only hurries along with it into the infernal gulph the vicious, the tepid, and the lukewarm Christian, but too often undermines the foundations of solid piety, and proves the eternal destruction of many who would have been Saints had they possessed the courage to withstand the force of evil example. On the other hand, how efficacious is the edifying example of but one of God's faithful servants! How many by that example are reclaimed from the path of vice; how many are confirmed in virtue, encouraged to fight manfully the battles of their Lord, taught to triumph over the obstacles to salvation, and conducted to their crown! The gift of tongues, and the power of working miracles, which the Almighty bestowed upon

the first Christians, did not half so much towards effecting the conversion of the heathen world, as did their holy lives, their edifying conversation, and the bright light of their incomparable virtues. Their preaching, unaccompanied by the practice of virtue, would have been an empty sound; their miracles might have excited momentary sensations of wonder and astonishment; but unsubdued by conviction, the heathens would have entertained no other sentiments than those of contempt for the preachers, and indifference to their cause. But when they saw those who thus announced themselves as having credentials from heaven to communicate tidings of salvation to the world, exhibiting at the same time a bright example of every virtue; when they beheld them pious, meek, disinterested, poor in spirit, despising the world, charitable even to their greatest enemies, and willing to lay down their lives for the glory of God and the salvation of souls; unable to withstand the bright glare of conviction which the torch of truth thus presented to their minds, they renounced their prejudices, embraced not only the doctrines but the virtues of their Apostles, and animated with the same spirit, ennobled and propagated the faith by a similar edifying and holy example.

You, my beloved brethren and fellow-members of the holy Catholic Church, have, by a distinguishing act of God's mercy, been called to the true faith; you have succeeded to this rich and glorious inheritance, the pledge of God's love for you, and the foundation of your own best hopes. Like the first Christians, you live in the midst of those who view the faith which you profess through the medium of misrepresentation and prejudice, and look upon yourselves with an eye of ridicule and contempt. Cut off from the unity of the fold of Christ, and strangers to the blessings that are to be found only in the communion of the true Church of Christ, they have the strongest of

claims upon your charity and compassion. You are bound daily to implore at the throne of mercy, the grace of their conversion; and much more are you under the strictest obligation of labouring to bring them to the knowledge of the truth by good example. If your souls are warmed with one spark of gratitude for the inestimable spiritual benefits which God has bestowed upon yourselves; if your breasts feel the least glow of true charity; if you are animated with any real love for that Saviour who gave himself a victim for man; can you behold those souls, for whom he died no less than for you, wandering in the paths of infidelity or error, in danger of eternal destruction, and not feel the obligation of endeavouring, by a holy life and pious conversation, to procure their conversion, and promote their eternal salvation? They hear you continually boasting of the holiness of your faith, and of the Church to which you belong; and sometimes, perhaps, witness the able defence which you make of your religion, when attacked, in the way of argument. But, believe me, they judge of the merits of your cause, not by your words or professions, but by your actions and your lives. If, then, while they hear you loudly proclaiming and defending the truth of your faith by argument, they see your lives pass in a slothful neglect of some of the most essential duties of a Christian, or stained with crimes that would disgrace even a heathen, either proud of their own moral superiority, or disgusted with your shameful inconsistency of conduct, they become more deeply rooted than ever in their prejudices against your religion, and more ready to believe the foul aspersions thrown out against your faith. My God! what accumulated vengeance will one day fall upon the heads of those unhappy men who shall stand accused of having thus brought a scandal upon religion by their wicked lives, and of having proved an obstacle instead of a help to the conversion and salvation of their neighbour! When

I look at the lives of some among you who now hear me, and reflect at the same time on the terrible account which God will one day demand from you, of the use you have made of the true faith, and the blessings attached to it, I am struck with horror, and could almost wish, with the Apostle, that I might sink into annihilation rather than witness the dreadful scene of your judgment and condemnation. In labouring as a minister of God to reclaim the ignorant and the sinner, there is no greater obstacle which I meet with than the evil examples and disedifying lives of those among you who live not up to the holiness of your faith. Oh! that I could prevail upon every one of you, my dear flock in Jesus Christ, by a virtuous conduct, and the steady practice of every duty, to labour with me in propagating the true faith, and promoting the salvation of souls! What happy fruits of repentance would then crown the prayers and tears of our holy mother the Church on earth, and give joy to the blessed spirits in heaven! What glorious conversions would adorn the Catholic faith, and increase the happy number of its professors, destined to be heirs of eternal life! There is not one among you, my beloved brethren, however obscure may be the station in which Providence has placed him, who has it not in his power, by a holy example, to aid the labours of his pastor, to co-operate with him in procuring the salvation of some one or other of those dear souls for whom Christ died, and thus secure to himself a share in that reward which is promised to those who instruct others unto justice: "they shall shine like stars for all eternity." Impressed with these truths, which I have here delivered to you, and sensible of the obligation under which you are, of endeavouring, at least by good example, to promote your neighbour's salvation, let it be the constant practice of your lives to manifest in your actions the holiness of the faith which you profess. Like the good Tobias, spread around you the sweet

odour of a holy life and virtuous conversation. *“Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.”* Matt. v. 16. *“Having your conversation good among the Gentiles, (the adversaries of your faith,) that whereas they speak against you as evil doers, considering you by your good works, they may give glory to God in the day of visitation.”* 1 Peter, ii. 12. But, my beloved brethren, the happy fruits of your good example and virtuous lives will not be confined to the propagation of the true faith, and the conversion and salvation of your neighbours. Great indeed as are these fruits, there are other no less happy effects which will flow from your edifying lives. The heart may conceive, but neither the tongue nor the pen can express, that delicious feast of the soul, that inward delight and satisfaction, that holy and unmixed joy which enraptures the mind at the consciousness of a life spent in virtue! The past time full of merit, the present gilded with hope, the future crowned with a glorious reward, all present to the soul of the truly just man and faithful servant of God, an uninterrupted source of consolation and holy joy, and furnish him upon earth with a foretaste of heaven.

Moreover, the virtuous Christian reaps another most excellent fruit of his holiness of life, and pious example, in the blessing of heaven upon those who are most dear to him, his children and family. He beholds these tender plants, nurtured by his care, and trained by his holy example, growing to maturity, rich in every virtue, propping and consoling his declining years, and throwing a shade of comfort and joy even over his grave. This the holy Scripture unfolds to us in the history of Tobias, both in the present portion of it under our consideration, and in other parts of it. Raguel, who had long been an admirer of the virtues of Tobias, was overjoyed when he found that his visitors were acquainted with that holy man. But, when

informed by the Angel that the young man who accompanied him was the son of his virtuous friend, he could no longer restrain his tears. Himself, his wife, and daughter, wept for joy; beholding in the young Tobias the happy fruits of his father's pious care, and an image of his virtue. Raguel, falling upon the young man's neck, embraced him, and exclaimed: "A blessing be upon thee, my child, because thou art the son of a good and most virtuous man."

Heaven, my beloved brethren, rewards in children the virtues of their parents. As you value then the happiness of your tender offspring, crown all your other endeavours for their good, by a holy and virtuous example. Without this, all the lessons of virtue which you may give them will be fruitless; accompanied with good example, your lessons will take root in their minds, and bring forth fruit in season. Inheriting from you the rich treasure of virtue, they will inherit together with it, the blessing of heaven. Like the young Tobias, during their journey through this mortal life, they will be under the special guidance of divine Providence; each circumstance of their lives will mark the all-protecting care of the Deity; the Angel of the Most High will guide their steps, direct their ways, counsel them in their doubts, remove their dangers, console their afflictions, receive their expiring breath, and conduct their souls to the mansions of eternal felicity.

SEVENTEENTH HOMILY.

Chap. VII. ver. 9. And after they had spoken, Raguel commanded a sheep to be killed, and a feast to be prepared. And when he desired them to sit down to dinner,...10. Tobias said: I will not eat or drink here this day, unless thou first grant me my petition, and promise to give me Sarah thy daughter.

You have seen, my beloved brethren, the cheerfulness and joy with which Raguel received his visitors, even before he knew who they were, or whence they came. But when he learned that one of these strangers was the son of his revered kinsman Tobias, he wept for joy. As soon as he had given vent to the feelings of nature, and passed a short time in friendly inquiries and social conversation, Raguel ordered a feast to be prepared for the entertainment of his guests; and when it was ready, invited them to dinner. But the young Tobias, who had previously received instructions from his heavenly guide in what manner he was to act, declared to Raguel, that he would neither eat nor drink in his house unless his kinsman would first consent to give him his daughter in marriage. This sudden declaration of Tobias may at first sight appear strange; but there is no doubt, that, in the conversation which had passed between Raguel and Tobias the important subject of the marriage of his daughter had been touched upon. Indeed the Greek text clears up the difficulty, relating the conversation of these holy men more at length, and mentioning certain circumstances which preceded and naturally led to the apparently strange and hasty declaration of the young Tobias. This holy young man, attentive to the Angel's advice and directions, after the first salutations of friendship were over, asked Sarah in marriage of her father. Raguel, full of affection for Tobias, and knowing what had hap-

pened to the former husbands of his daughter, at the same time that he expressed the most sincere regard for the young man, advised him to give up all thoughts of the marriage, and rather think of making merry, and enjoying himself by sitting down to the feast prepared for him. It was then that Tobias, instructed by the Angel, solemnly declared that he would not eat or drink with his kinsman, unless he would first consent to his marriage with Sarah. The book of Genesis, xxiv. 35. records an example of a similar behaviour on the part of Abraham's servant, Eliezer, when he was sent by his master to demand Rebecca in marriage for his son Isaac. Eliezer being arrived at the house to which he had been sent, was immediately invited to take some refreshment; but he replied, I will not eat until I have declared to you the business upon which I am come." In effect, he did not sit down to table until he had received a promise that Rebecca should return with him to espouse his master's son Isaac.

Another difficulty, arising from the conduct of the young Tobias on this occasion, here presents itself. Is it not astonishing that this holy young man, who in all other circumstances of his life appears to have been influenced by such sentiments of respect and affection for his parents, should have thought of engaging himself in marriage without their consent, nay, without having so much as consulted them? For, it may be asked, is it not a part of the duty which children owe to their parents, to consult them on this important step, and to follow their directions? Yes, dear Christians, it is most undoubtedly the duty of young persons thus to act, and a duty of strict obligation, from which nothing can excuse them, but either the inability to comply with it, or an evident opposition between the will of their parents and that of Almighty God. It may sometimes happen that vicious or worldly-minded parents, who have nothing in view but

temporal motives, may advise their children to contract marriages which would endanger their eternal salvation; or, actuated by the same unchristian motives, may oppose their making such an engagement in the married state, as the will of God, learnt by holy prayer and the advice of their director, manifestly points out for them. In such cases, children are certainly to prefer the will of God and their eternal salvation, before the corrupt motives and perverse will of their parents; but preserving, at the same time, both in their inward sentiment and in their outward behaviour, that respect and affection, from which nothing can dispense them.

The young Tobias, at the time of his proposal of marriage with Sarah, was at the distance of many days journey from his parents, and it was therefore impossible for him to make known to them his intentions and ask their consent. Besides, he acted on this occasion by the direction of the heavenly guide, whom Providence had deputed to conduct his steps. He did not indeed know as yet that his companion was actually an Angel of the Lord; but by the piety, prudence, and excellent instructions which he had received from his guide, accompanied by the interior motions of grace with which the Holy Ghost at the same time touched his own heart, he was convinced that God spoke by the mouth of his companion and director, and consequently that it was his duty faithfully to put in practice all his counsels and instructions.

I have before observed to you, my beloved brethren, that the care which the Angel Raphael took of the young Tobias, is an emblem of the invisible protection afforded us by the holy Angels whom God has appointed to be our guardians during our mortal pilgrimage. The history of the young Tobias, moreover, discovers to our view some of those admirable springs by which divine Providence directs the visible creation, and so disposes both the animate and inanimate

part of it as to promote the good of his elect. In the truly important affair of the marriage of Tobias, an affair on which the happiness of this young man for time and eternity so much depended, nothing is left that can be ascribed to chance or human prudence; all is guided and directed by the hand of God in the clearest manner, to shew that a holy and happy marriage is the work of God and not of men. "Father and mother," says the book of Proverbs, "give houses and riches; but it is the Lord himself who gives a wise wife," xix. 14.; that is, a wife filled with piety and the fear of the Lord; for, in the language of holy Scripture, wisdom and piety are inseparable from each other. The same truth the Church of God inculcates in the prayer which she offers up at the end of the mass that is celebrated for imploring the blessing of heaven upon a Christian marriage: "O God, who alone art master of the heart of man, who knowest and governest all things by thy Providence, if thou joinest together, no one can separate; if thou givest a blessing, no one can hinder the salutary effects of thy benediction."

A holy and happy marriage is therefore the work of God, and at the same time one of his choicest blessings. The christian who hopes to enjoy this blessing, must dispose himself for it by entering into that holy state with a pure intention of the glory of God, and of answering the end for which matrimony was instituted. But that he may not fail in this truly important step, he must, in the first place, seek instruction, and endeavour to make himself thoroughly acquainted with the nature of this sacred institution, the dispositions requisite for approaching to it worthily, and the obligations arising from it. For your instruction, my beloved brethren, I intend to give each of these points a full and clear discussion.

In order to form a just notion of marriage, let us go back to its first institution by our Creator himself, in

the garden of paradise. After the formation of the first man Adam, the book of Genesis, ii. 28, represents Almighty God as speaking and acting in the following manner. "The Lord God said: It is not good for man to be alone. Let us make for him a help like to himself. Then the Lord God sent a deep sleep upon Adam; and while he slept, he took out one of his ribs; and put flesh in the place of it; and the Lord God formed the woman out of the rib which he had taken from Adam, and brought her to Adam. Then Adam said: this is now bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh.—For this reason, man shall leave his Father and mother, and shall adhere to his wife, and they two shall be one flesh." These words, which, as the Council of Trent observes, the first man spoke by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, teach us that marriage, according to its first institution, is an union of man and woman, formed by God himself, for their mutual comfort during life; an union more close than that which binds us to those from whom we received our birth, a union, in fine, which nothing but death can dissolve. "What God hath put together, let no man separate," says our divine Redeemer, speaking of the bond of marriage. Such was the marriage union in its natural state and primitive institution. But in the New Law, that is, in the Christian dispensation, this natural union is raised to the dignity of a holy union and religious ceremony, blessed with the grace which God, by virtue of the merits and the institution of Jesus Christ, has annexed to the ministry of the Church and the nuptial benediction, in order, says the Council of Trent, to perfect the natural love of man and wife, to confirm their union, and to sanctify married persons.

The apostle St. Paul gives us a still higher idea of the marriage union of Christians, telling us, that it is a sign and mysterious representation of the holy, spiritual, and indissoluble union which subsists between Jesus Christ and his chaste spouse the Church. Ex-

plaining this mystery to the Ephesians, he says, "Let women be subject to their husbands in the Lord, for the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ is the head of the Church. Therefore, as the Church is subject to Christ, so also let wives be subject to their husbands in all things. And you, husbands, love your wives, as Christ also loved the Church and delivered himself up for it, that he might sanctify it, cleansing it by the laver of water in the word of life; that he might present it to himself a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle, nor any such thing, but that it should be holy and without blemish. So also ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife, and they shall be two in one flesh. This is a great mystery, or sacrament, I speak in Christ and in the Church." Eph. v. 22, &c. I wish that all Christians who are already engaged, or think of engaging, in the married state, would weigh well these words of St. Paul, and impress upon their minds the holiness of Christian marriage. The Church of God, the faithful interpreter of the divine word, conformably to this doctrine of the Apostle, has ever taught that matrimony is one of the sacraments of the New Law; that is, one of those excellent institutions which the divine goodness has appointed for conveying to the souls of Christians the grace of God. Matrimony, says the holy Council of Trent, being more excellent in the evangelical law than it was before the coming of Christ, on account of the grace annexed to it by Jesus Christ, it is with reason that the holy Fathers, Councils, and the universal tradition of the Church have, in every age, taught that it is to be reckoned among the sacraments of the New Law. It is therefore a point of faith, that whoever enters into the married state with proper views and intentions, with purity of conscience, and with an earnest desire of sanctifying his soul, and fulfilling the important obligations

of matrimony, receives by virtue of this sacred institution, an abundant supply of divine grace to enable him to support the difficulties and to fulfil the duties of that holy state. But this supply of divine grace is given to those only who bring to the sacrament of matrimony the holy dispositions which I have just mentioned. If Christians, therefore, when they engage in matrimony, have no other objects in view than the acquirement of a fortune, the possession of beauty, wit, or talents, or the gratification of passion, not only are their marriages no better than those of heathens, they are *much worse* in the sight of God, being so many profanations of one of his most holy and most merciful institutions.

The apostle St. Paul would have all Christians, as truly followers of Christ, to seek the divine glory in every circumstance of their lives: "Whether you eat or drink, or whatever else you do, do all for the glory of God." 1 Cor. x. 31. Of how much more consequence then, and of how much greater obligation is it, that we should act under the guidance of this truly Christian principle of seeking the glory of God when we perform any acts of religion, more especially when we approach to any of the holy sacraments: of which matrimony is one and one of very great importance, for the happiness of a great proportion of Christians is closely connected with it. It is this view to the glory of God, this acting from a spirit of religion, which properly makes a *Christian* marriage. A good Christian engages in marriage, not from any motive of worldly interest, ambition, or passion; he seeks a wife, with whom, in the midst of the employments and occupations of the world, he may dedicate a due proportion of time to the service of God and holy prayer; who may share with him the pains and pleasures of this life in perfect union of heart and affection, and who may faithfully concur with him in the virtuous education of their common family. These are the ob-

jects which Christians should have in view when they think of entering into the married state.

Having thus explained to you, at length, the nature of matrimony, both in its primitive institution and in its new dignity as a sacrament of the Christian Church, together with the views with which Christians are to engage in it, I shall reserve for another discourse *the important obligations* of married persons. For the present I shall add a few words of advice to young persons on the preparation necessary for those who wish to secure the divine blessing upon their marriage. In the first place, as their engaging in marriage is one of the most important steps of their whole life, and that on which happiness or misery, both for time and eternity, greatly depends, young persons, before they come to any determination on this point, should endeavour, by holy prayer and by fervently approaching from time to time to the holy sacraments of penance and the eucharist, to learn the will of God; whether it is conformable to his will that they should enter into that state, and more particularly whether the object of their choice is agreeable to his divine appointment for them. In the second place after having used their good endeavours to learn the will of God on these two important points, and being satisfied, as far as it is possible to be satisfied in our present state of darkness and uncertainty, both by their own inward lights and the direction of their pastor, that they are acting in conformity to the divine will in entering into that holy state, let them continue the same pious means of prayer and the holy sacraments, for the purpose of securing a continuance of the divine blessing, and for obtaining the holy dispositions necessary for receiving the graces annexed to the sacrament of matrimony. With this view, let them ask the advice of their spiritual director; and faithfully put in practice the rule of conduct and the pious exercises which he may recommend, for some time before their marriage, as

most proper for them. Above all, let them during this time of preparation be more than ordinarily watchful over their actions, more careful of flying from sin and the occasions of it. Few, indeed, are the young persons who thus prepare themselves for marriage, and few, consequently, are the marriages which are attended with the blessing of heaven upon them. As God is not invited to be present at them, he is not to be found at them. Now, what happiness or what success can be expected from an undertaking which has not his blessing upon it? How dreadful must be the effect, both temporal and eternal, of an union, which from its sinful motives, and unworthy dispositions, perhaps too accompanied with a profanation of the sacraments, is an object of horror in the divine sight! Do you, at least, my dear children in Jesus Christ, sensible of the holiness of the married state, its difficulties and dangers, its obligations, and the happiness which attends it when accompanied with the divine blessing, faithfully follow the rules which I have here pointed out for the regulation of your conduct in preparing for it, and you will infallibly secure to your souls the graces that will sanctify your marriage, enable you to surmount the difficulties of that state, avoid its dangers, and fulfil all the important obligations of it:

EIGHTEENTH HOMILY.

Chap. VII. ver. 11. Now when Raguel heard this, he was afraid, knowing what had happened to those seven husbands that went in unto her; and he began to fear lest it might happen to him (Tobias) also in like manner: and as he was in suspense, and gave no answer to his petition,.....*12.* The Angel said to him: Be not afraid to give her to this man: for to him who feareth God is thy daughter due to be his wife: therefore another could not have her.

THE young Tobias, in obedience to the Angel's direction, and consequently to the will of heaven, had asked for Sarah in marriage; and to shew the steady determination of his mind, had declared that he would not eat with Raguel until he had given his consent to the marriage. Raguel, knowing the dreadful misfortune that had befallen the seven first husbands of his daughter, feared lest a similar untimely end might be the fate of his young kinsman, and therefore made no reply to the urgent request of Tobias. The Angel then interfered, and exhorted Raguel to banish his fears; assuring him that his virtuous kinsman was the person whom divine Providence had destined for his son-in-law, and that the former husbands of his daughter had not been deserving of her. After this assurance of the Angel, Raguel hesitated not a moment, but expressed his acquiescence to the divine appointment in these words:

Ver. 13. Then Raguel said: I doubt not God hath regarded my prayers and tears in his sight.....*14.* And I believe he hath therefore made you come to me, that this maid might be married to one of her own kindred, according to the law of Moses: and now doubt not but I will give her to thee.

Raguel, faithful to his sacred obligations as a parent, was not content with having given his daughter a virtuous education in her youth, but considered it a part

of his duty to pray daily for the blessing of heaven upon his child, that in her riper years she might marry agreeably to the divine will, and conformably to the law of Moses. This law, as I have before observed, required that the different tribes should not intermix with each other, but that each one of the children of Israel should select a partner from his or her own tribe. During the captivity and the dispersion of ten of the tribes, the observance of this law was become extremely difficult. Yet Raguel, like the good Tobias, was anxious, notwithstanding the difficulty, to see it fulfilled in his family; and made it the subject of his daily prayers and tears that heaven would enable his daughter to comply with it. His conduct in this respect is a model, first, for all parents, teaching them, that one of their most important duties is daily prayer for their children; and, secondly, for every Christian, inculcating to them how much the blessing of heaven depends upon their strictly fulfilling the divine will, and complying with the laws and regulations of the Church respecting marriage. It is the duty of every Christian to be well acquainted with these laws of the Church of God, that they may not draw a curse upon their marriage instead of a blessing, by contracting matrimony within the degrees of relationship forbidden by the Church, or celebrating it at the seasons in which the Church prohibits the solemnization of marriage.

Raguel had made it his daily prayer, that his daughter in marrying might fulfil the law and will of God, and his prayer was heard. As soon as the Angel assured him that Tobias was the husband whom God had destined for his daughter, he no longer hesitated a moment to give his consent. It is true, that neither Raguel nor Tobias yet knew that the stranger who was with them was an Angel; they took him for what he appeared to be, a young man of their tribe. Still, there was something in the very mien and behaviour

of Raphael, and in his manner of speaking, which appeared more than human, and commanded the respect and instant assent of those to whom he addressed himself. On all occasions he delivers himself with an air of authority. At his first entrance into the house of the elder Tobias, he tells him with confidence *that his care from God is at hand*. He promises, without any hesitation or condition, to conduct his son to Rages, and bring him back in safety. He bids the young Tobias demand Sarah in marriage, assuring him of success. In the same authoritative tone, he dispels the fears and anxieties of Raguel, and speaks as one well acquainted with the designs of Providence; assuring him that his daughter was destined for the young Tobias, and for that reason no other person had been permitted to have her for a wife. All the holy personages to whom he addresses himself, place in a moment the most implicit confidence in him. The elder Tobias, without the least mistrust or suspicion, confides to this stranger the care of his darling son, for whom he manifests on other occasions such extreme prudence and caution. The son listens with the utmost docility to the advice of this stranger, and practises it with the greatest exactness. Raguel, at his bare assurance, changes his sentiments, his fears vanish, a new light breaks in upon his mind, and his alarms are succeeded by confidence and hope. He cries out with joy, "Now I doubt not but God hath regarded my prayers and tears in his sight; and I believe that he hath therefore made you come to me that this maid might be married to one of her own kindred, according to the law of Moses: and now doubt not but I will give her to thee." To what can we ascribe this veneration, confidence, and docility, which these holy men testify for the stranger that addresses them, but to the influence of the Holy Spirit secretly animating them to follow the guidance of him whom it had deputed to be their comfort and protection? Raphael discov-

ers not as yet who he really is; but his words and whole conduct bespeak him something greater than what he appears to be; and the servants of God, with whom he converses, ever ready to testify their obedience to the divine will, hear him with docility, and obey him without hesitation. Oh! that Christians, with a like spirit, would receive and follow the instructions of those whom, with a much greater degree of certainty, God has pointed out to them as the guides whom he has constituted to lead them in the path to salvation, viz. the pastors of the church!

Ver. 15. Then taking the right-hand of his daughter, he gave it into the right-hand of Tobias, saying: the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, be with you, and may he join you together, and fulfil his blessing in you.

The Catholic Church, in the celebration of matrimony, makes use of the same ceremony of joining hands, as an emblem of the holy union of man and wife in marriage. To impress more strongly upon the minds of her children the sanctity of the married state, the Church administers the sacrament of matrimony with great solemnity. She exhorts those who come to receive this sacrament, to be careful to dispose themselves for it by prayer and the other means which I pointed out to you in my last instruction; more especially, by an humble and sincere confession of their sins, and the worthy participation of the body and blood of our Lord. The marriage ceremony is performed publicly, that is, before witness; and where the Catholic religion is protected by the civil law, the banns, or public declaration of each intended marriage, is made publicly in the Church on three preceeding Sundays or festival days, in order that the faithful may join together in begging the blessing of heaven upon the married couple, and that if any of the faithful know of any circumstance which would render the marriage either null or criminal, he may lay it open to

his pastor, and prevent the profanation of the sacrament. When nothing is discovered that ought to prevent the intended marriage, the parties present themselves, at the time appointed, before their pastor, who interrogates each of them on the subject of the voluntary consent. After this, the parties testify their acceptance of each other by an union of hands, and the priest confirms that union in the name of the Blessed Trinity. He then blesses the nuptial ring with a form of prayer adapted to that purpose, and prays God to be present at and give his blessing to the marriage. The holy sacrifice of the mass is then offered up, at which the nuptial benediction is given in the most solemn manner, immediately after the Pater Noster. At the end of the mass, the minister of God turning to the new married couple, says, "May the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, be with you, and may he fulfil his blessing in you; that you may see your children's children unto the third and fourth generation, and afterwards enjoy everlasting life, through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with the Father and the Holy Ghost, one God, world without end, Amen." This blessing, on the part of the Church, is a prayer that God, who is the source of all benediction, *will be with the new married couple*, since he alone can make them happy; that *he will confirm their union* with the bond of holy love and affection, and that *he will fulfil or complete the blessing* by a virtuous offspring, who may inherit the virtues of the ancient patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and the promises made to them. The solemn ceremony of Christian marriage is concluded by a serious exhortation, which the priest addresses to the married couple, admonishing them of the fidelity which they owe to each other, and exhorting them to live together in the fear of God, in holy conjugal love and affection, and faithfully to discharge their respective duties and mutual obligations. Now,

these duties are of two kinds, both of them of the greatest importance. As I have elsewhere spoken of one branch of these duties, of married persons which regards their children, (see second Homily,) I shall now enter into a detail of the other branch of the duties of married persons, those which they owe reciprocally to each other. These are so clearly marked down in holy Scripture, that little else is necessary but to quote the very words of the inspired writers. First, St. Paul, in his epistle to the Colossians, iii. 18, says, "Wives, be subject to your husbands, as it behoveth in the Lord."—*Eph. v. 22*. "Let wives be subject to their husbands, as to the Lord: because the husband is the head of the wife, as Jesus Christ is the head of the Church, which is his body, and of which also he is the Saviour."—"Let wives," says St. Peter, *1 Ep. iii. 1*, &c. "be subject to their husbands, that if any believe not the word, they may be won (or gained over) without the word, by the conversation of their wives, when they consider the purity of their lives and respectful conversation." He then proposes the examples of the holy women of old, who lived in subjection to their husbands, and especially that of Sarah, who obeyed Abraham, calling him Lord: "whose daughters," says the Apostle, "you also are, if you do that which is good." In the book of Tobias, Raguel and his wife exhort their daughter to honour her father and mother-in-law, to regulate well her household, to govern well her family, and to preserve herself blameless in all things. *Tob. x. 13*. In several passages, the great apostles, St. Peter and St. Paul, admonish Christian wives to love and be faithful to their husbands, to watch over their family at home, to take due care of their household, to be chaste, sober, modest, in their dress, and humble in their behaviour; proposing to them as the great end which they are to have in fulfilling these duties, the glory of God, the walking hand in hand with their husbands in the prac-

tice of Christian virtues; or, if their husbands are unhappily not in the pale of the true Church, the gaining of them to Christ by a holy life and affectionate conduct. See Titus ii. 1 Tim. ii. 1 Peter iii. 3.

Secondly, addressing himself to husbands, St. Paul says, Col. iii. 19. "Husbands, love your wives, and be not bitter towards them."—Eph. v. 25. "And you, husbands, love your wives, as Jesus Christ has loved the Church, delivering himself up for it. So ought husbands to love their wives as their own bodies."—St. Peter says, "You, husbands, likewise dwell with your wives, according to knowledge, giving honour to the woman as to the weaker vessel, and as your joint-heirs of the grace of life, that your prayers may not be hindered."—In a variety of other passages of holy writ, husbands are exhorted to rule their families with mildness, to behave with all affection and tenderness towards their wives, and to avoid all harshness, and much more all savage fierceness and brutal violence of conduct towards them. God declares, by the prophet Malachy, ii. 13. that he will not hear the prayers of husbands who are guilty of ill-treatment towards their wives. Yet, how often do we witness such brutal conduct in husbands; and how great a proportion of the miseries of married persons owe their origin to a want of this mild and affectionate behaviour! More especially, when to this defect are joined the mispending of their time in drinking, gaming, &c. and the squandering away of the support of their families! This is a crime so heinous in the sight of God, that St. Paul declares, "If any man has not care of his own family, he has denied his faith, and is worse than an infidel." 1 Tim. v. 8.

Thirdly, married persons, both husband and wife, are strictly charged by the apostle St. Paul, to render faithfully to each other the marriage debt. For either party to refuse this, without mutual consent, is a crime, a heinous violation of duty, and oftentimes the source

of the most shocking excesses. 1 Cor. vii. 3. The angel Raphael instructed the holy Tobias to discharge this, and the like duties of marriage, in the fear of the Lord, and with purity of intention, that he might not be of the number of those who, following no other rule but their passions, and consequently having banished God from their heart, are delivered over to the devil for eternal destruction.

Such, my beloved brethren, is an outline, taken from holy Scripture, of the duties which married persons owe to each other. There is no class of duties of greater importance to mankind; and, unfortunately, none with which the generality of men are less acquainted. To this fatal ignorance, and the neglect which follows from it, are owing those scenes of misery which so often disgrace the married state, pervert it from its primitive institution, and render it a kind of hell upon earth. Blinded by passion, or under the guidance of motives that would have shocked a moral heathen; too often, at least, without one thought of God or their own eternal welfare, many, who call themselves Christians, rush into matrimony, neither aware of its sanctity nor acquainted with its obligations; perhaps too, in defiance of the laws of the Church. Hence those scenes of domestic strife and contention; hence too, oftentimes those dreadful profanations of the sacraments, which call down the curse of heaven even in this life!

That you, my beloved brethren, may have no share in this unhappiness, I have unfolded to you these important points, the knowledge of which is of so much consequence to you; viz. the sanctity of marriage in its primitive institution, and much more in its sacramental dignity; the pure intention, and the holy dispositions with which you should enter into the married state; the manner of preparing for it; the solemn administration of matrimony, and the sacred obligations and duties which it imposes upon you. Let these im-

portant instructions sink deep into your mind, and regulate your conduct by them. Take the young Tobias for your model; and with the same docility with which he received and fulfilled the advice of his guide, treasure up in your souls and follow the lessons which I have given you. If already engaged in the married state, and you are sensible that your conduct in first embracing it, or since you have lived in it, has not been conformable to the line which I have here marked out to you, labour to repair past misconduct by true repentance. If you are looking forward to the married state, let these instructions guide you, and, like Tobias, you will reap the fruits of them in abundance of blessings, both temporal and eternal. Your marriage, being truly Christian, will be a holy union, pleasing before God, fruitful in peace, comfort, and happiness during the short course of your mortal pilgrimage, and conducting you to an everlasting union in the mansions of eternal bliss.

Before I conclude these important instructions on matrimony, I will add a few words on the manner of keeping a Christian wedding, or the feast which usually follows a marriage. A feast on such occasions, to which the relations and friends of the parties are invited, is by no means improper, being sanctioned by the example of Jesus Christ himself, who attended by invitation at the marriage-feast at Cana. But let Christians remember likewise, to invite Jesus Christ to their wedding-feast, and not give their sanction to any company, behaviour, conversation, or diversion, that would profane the presence or forfeit the blessing of this heavenly guest. Let no drunkenness, debauchery, filthy songs, or loose discourse, rob them of the fruit of those divine blessings which their approaching to the sacraments on this solemn occasion was destined to produce in their souls. Let them rejoice, but rejoice in the Lord; entertaining themselves in the company of the pious, observing sobriety in their feasting,

modesty in their conversation, watchfulness over their whole conduct; concluding the day with fervent united prayer, to implore the blessing of heaven upon the consummation of their marriage. In these respects, I again propose the marriage of Tobias for your model. When Tobias and Sarah were married, the holy Scripture says,

Ver. 16. And taking paper, they made a writing of their marriage.....17. And afterwards they made merry, blessing God.

Admire the conduct of these holy persons. Full of simplicity, and guided by a spirit of religion, they wait until after their marriage, without any mistrust or suspicion on either side, for the drawing up of the marriage articles. Having thus settled what prudence required as a provision and security for temporal concerns, they sit down to a feast, not with a view to the indulgence of appetite, or from any sensual motive, but chiefly to bless God, to express their joy and thanksgiving for his having, in so truly wonderful a manner, directed his servants by the finger of his Providence, and brought about this holy marriage union; an union entered upon with the purest intention, in conformity to his divine will and holy law, and consequently sealed and confirmed with a promise of his blessings for time and eternity.

NINETEENTH HOMILY.

Chap. VII. ver. 18. And Raguel called to him Anna his wife, and bid her prepare another chamber.....*19.* And she brought Sarah her daughter in thither, and she wept.....*20.* And she said to her: Be of good cheer, my daughter, the Lord of heaven give thee joy for the trouble thou hast undergone.

THE two preceding instructions on the important subject of marriage have enabled me to lay before your view, my beloved brethren, the dispositions and intentions with which a Christian should enter into marriage, the graces and blessings annexed to the worthy receiving of matrimony, and the duties and obligations attached to that holy state. I then proposed to you to take the conduct of the holy Tobias for your model on these important points. What follows in the Scripture account of the marriage of this holy young man, is no less worthy of your attention, and furnishes no less admirable lessons of instruction.

According to the custom of the Hebrew nation, a custom much to be commended for its strict conformity to decency and purity, Sarah was conducted to the nuptial bed by her parents, some time before her husband. On entering the chamber prepared for her, she wept; her tears, without doubt, flowing from the remembrance of her past afflictions, and the unhappy fate that had befallen her former husbands. Her mother, seeing her distress, consoled her with the hope that divine Providence would on this occasion recompense her past sorrow and trouble with abundance of joy.

Chap. VIII. ver. 1. And after they had supped, they brought in the young man to her.....*2.* And Tobias, remembering the Angel's word, took out of his bag part of the liver, and laid it upon burning coals.*3.* Then the angel Raphael took the devil, and bound him in the desert of Upper Egypt.

When supper was over, Tobias was conducted to the chamber of the bride by her parents, and left

alone with her. His first care was to fulfil immediately the advice of the angel Raphael in every particular. The Angel had directed him as soon as he should enter the nuptial chamber to lay the heart and liver of the fish upon burning coals, assuring him that God would, by these simple means, prevent the malice of the devil, and preserve his servant. Tobias did as the Angel had advised him; and God, who is ever faithful to his promise, by his Angel chased away the evil spirit that had been the instrument of his vengeance against the former wicked husbands of Sarah, and permitted not the devil to exercise the power before allowed him, except at a great distance from the spot where Tobias and Sarah were. Happy obedience, which proved to this holy man the source of so many and such distinguished blessings from heaven!—Tobias knew not that his guide was actually an Angel, deputed to guide him; but feeling persuaded that Providence had provided him with this faithful conductor, he was resolved to obey all his injunctions, being assured that his obedience would secure the blessing of heaven. Such are the sentiments which animate the true servants of God. Their spirit is a spirit of docility and obedience; but how rarely are this spirit and these sentiments to be met with among Christians! How few, like Tobias, are scrupulously exact and diligent in practising the advice given them for their spiritual improvement by the pastor whom God has appointed to guide their souls! God has given the assurance of his sacred word, that the pastors of his Church are those whom he himself has commissioned to guide us, that he speaks by their mouth, and that he considers the obedience or disobedience shewn to them, as shewn to himself. Yet, what is the conduct of the generality of Christians? I speak not here of the little attention which is paid by the flock to the public instructions of their pastor in sermons or at catechism; but, if we may judge from the lives of the greater part of those

who at stated times frequent the sacraments, of the little attention which Christians pay to the advice which they receive from their pastor in the sacred tribunal of penance, and the little care which they take to put in practice the lessons there given for the regulation and improvement of their lives. In the sacred tribunal of confession, God has appointed for every one an Angel, that is, a minister, by whose mouth he delivers those salutary truths which are destined, if faithfully followed, to root out their past spiritual disorders, to infuse into their minds a light that will guide their future steps in the way of virtue, and preserve them from the snares laid for them by the malice of the devil. But the greater part of Christians, contenting themselves with the bare confession of their sins, and the performance of their sacramental penance, think no more of the advice given them in the confessional for the regulation and amendment of their lives, but return with thoughtless unconcern to their usual course of dissipation and intercourse with the world. Hence they carry with them the same transgressions again and again to confession, and too often from confession to the grave; their disorders increase and strengthen, and their disobedience to the advice of the guide appointed by heaven to conduct them, shuts the door to the divine blessing, and robs them of the fruit which they would otherwise reap to their souls from the sacred institutions of God's mercy, the sacraments of his Church. I exhort you, therefore, my beloved brethren, to imitate the conduct of the good Tobias, in making it an invariable rule of your behaviour, when you receive the advice of your spiritual guide, to lay it up carefully in your minds, and with faithful docility practise it in all its branches.

The more important part of the Angel's directions to Tobias still remained to be fulfilled; and notwithstanding the suggestions of flesh and blood, the holy young man diligently complied with it.

Ver. 4. Then Tobias exhorted the virgin, and said to her: Sarah arise, and let us pray to God to-day, and to-morrow, and the next day: because for these three nights we are joined to God; and when the third night is over we will be in our own wedlock.....5. For we are the children of Saints, and we must not be joined together like heathens who know not God.

How solid is the piety of this young man! how holy are his sentiments! All his thoughts are employed on the securing of the divine blessing upon his marriage. At his entrance, therefore, into the nuptial chamber, he employs the means recommended by the Angel for chasing away the devil; he banishes every unbecoming thought from his own mind, and calls upon his spouse to unite with him in fervent prayer for the divine favour and protection. It is not time, says he, as yet, to consummate our marriage; we have a more important task to accomplish—the chaste and holy union of our hearts with God. To promote this holy object, let us put up our united ardent supplications to the throne of grace during the three first nights; for we are children of those holy patriarchs, who, by the like pious means, sanctified themselves in the married state. We have the happiness to know and to serve the same God as they did: let us then, with a fidelity like theirs, give ourselves to him with all our hearts; let us rise superior to the suggestions of sense and passion; and let us manifest to the world the difference between the true children of Abraham, and the heathens who know not God. Such were the admirable sentiments of this young Israelite; sentiments which will cover with eternal shame and confusion those nominal Christians, whose marriage differs in nothing from that of pagans, except in the mere outward ceremonies of religion which accompany it, but which engage their attention only for a moment, and are presently forgotten; and their passions are suffered to lead them into those criminal excesses which disgrace the marriages of heathens, and are the objects of God's abhorrence.

Sarah obeyed the call of her husband, and united with him in prayer:

Ver. 6. They both arose (says the sacred text) and prayed earnestly both together, that health might be given them.

The holy Scripture has recorded their prayer as a model for the direction of married persons in the views which they ought to bring with them to their holy union, and the sentiments which should animate their hearts on that solemn occasion.

Ver. 7. And Tobias said: Lord God of our fathers, may the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the fountains, and the rivers, and all thy creatures that are in them, bless thee:.....8. Thou madest Adam of the slime of the earth, and gavest him Eve for a helper.....9. And now, O Lord, thou knowest, that not for fleshly lust do I take my sister (relation) to wife, but only for the love of posterity, in which thy name may be blessed for ever and ever.....10. Sarah also said: Have mercy on us, O Lord, have mercy on us, and let us grow old both together in health.

Our blessed Redeemer assures us, that from the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. This excellent prayer of Tobias unfolds to us the heart of this holy young man. Impressed with a constant sense of the divine presence; full of the most sublime ideas of the divine power, goodness, and mercy; sensible that all the works of the Almighty are designed to promote his own glory and the happiness of his creatures; Tobias invites the whole creation to unite with him in praising God for his past mercies: then, having always the glory of God in view as the end of all his actions, he declares the purity of intention with which he had entered the married state; not impelled by any criminal passion, but that he might be the father of a virtuous family, faithful servants of the true God; and he looks with confidence for the blessing of God, in reward for his piety and purity of heart. His wife unites in fervent supplication for the blessing of health; not

merely the health of the body, but the much more important health of the soul, that they may persevere in innocence and virtue to a good old age, blessed with a virtuous race of children, faithfully trained in the service of their Creator. Their prayer was heard, as the sequel of their history informs us. How many truly pious and happy marriages should we see among Christians, if they entered the married state under the guidance of the same spirit which animated this holy couple, and followed its directions in their lives; if husband and wife considered themselves as instruments of divine Providence in propagating a succession of faithful servants of God, and followers of Jesus Christ; and with this view would labour earnestly to fulfil their important obligations as parents, by giving their children a truly virtuous education!

Ver. 11. And it came to pass about the cock-crowing, Raguel ordered his servants to be called for, and they went with him together to dig a grave.....12. For he said Lest perhaps it may have happened to him in like manner as it did to the other seven husbands that went in unto her...13. And when they had prepared the pit, Raguel went back to his wife, and said to her.....14. Send one of thy maids, and let her see if he be dead, that I may bury him before it be day.

How striking a proof is this of the weakness of human nature! Raguel but a short time before had expressed his confidence that God had heard his prayers, and seemed overjoyed at the prospect of his having so virtuous a son-in-law. Now, his confidence is all vanished, and he is entirely overcome by his fears. Full of the melancholy thoughts suggested by reflecting upon the fate of the former husbands of his daughter, he passes the night without rest and without sleep. Apprehensive that Tobias has met with the same dreadful misfortune as had befallen Sarah's former husbands, he takes the necessary precautions, rises from his bed before the night is over, and calls his servants to assist him in preparing a grave. So fickle, so inconstant is the mind of man, so weak are

even the very best of us when left to the motions of our own heart. Our good resolutions are soon forgotten; the slightest breath of temptation shakes them. One moment we are all courage and confidence; the next, mistrust and terror. Like the chief of the Apostles, we at one time rely so much upon the strength of our present dispositions, that we imagine nothing can alter them; we feel confident that we can stand any assault, even of death itself, rather than part with our virtue: and presently, a mere passing thought, a slight word from a fellow-creature, or a threat of some temporal calamity, overturns all our fancied strength, and manifests us, as we really are, made up of frailty, corruption, and misery. Our only security and protection against this fatal weakness of our nature, is that true and solid humility which teaches us to know ourselves as we are, to confess our own nothingness and inability to do good of ourselves, and at the same time to place all our confidence in God, and to seek for help and strength from Him who accepts the prayer of the humble, and never despises their petition.

Raguel, in the moment of his weakness and diffidence, gives up all his former sources of hope and consolation, considers the death of Tobias as certain, prepares his grave, and desires his wife to send one of her maid-servants to the nuptial chamber to see if he be not already dead.

Ver. 15. So she sent one of her maid-servants, who went into the chamber, and found them safe and sound, sleeping both together.....*16.* And returning, she brought the good news, and Raguel and Anna his wife blessed the Lord,.....*17.* And said: We bless thee, O Lord God of Israel, because it hath not happened as we suspected.....*18.* For thou hast shewn thy mercy to us, and hast shut out from us the enemy that persecuted us.....*19.* And thou hast taken pity upon two only children. Make them, O Lord, bless thee more fully; and to offer up to thee a sacrifice of thy praise, and of their health, that all nations may know that thou alone art God in all the earth.

The Royal Prophet assures us that the Angels of the Lord encamp round about those who fear him.

Tobias and Sarah having engaged in marriage in the fear of the Lord, and recommended themselves to his holy protection by fervent prayer, retired to rest with a firm confidence in that divine Providence which watches over the slumbers of its servants. The maid whom Anna had sent to their chamber, found them in a quiet and profound repose. The joyful news of their safety awakens in Raguel all his former sentiments of the divine goodness; ashamed of his momentary mistrust in Providence, he loses not an instant to repair his fault, but breaks forth in praise and thanksgiving to his Creator. His wife unites with him in this holy duty of gratitude and prayer. Not content with their own effusions of thanksgiving, springing from a heart truly grateful for the divine blessing, they beg of God to fill the breasts of their Children with a grateful sense of his mercies, and to excite in them a gratitude proportioned to the wonderful favours which he had shewn them. They pray that the Almighty may be glorified in the virtuous lives of their children, and that by their holy example the nations of the earth may be brought to know and to adore the true God. This prayer of Raguel and Anna inculcates two very important lessons of instruction, the one to Christians in general, the other to parents in particular. Christians may learn to receive the blessings of heaven with gratitude, and, as no day passes in which each of us does not experience the bounty of God, not a day should be suffered to pass without bringing its morning and evening tribute of thanksgiving to the Deity. More especially in the moments in which we experience any particular favour from God, we should immediately raise our hearts and thoughts to him, and offer him a short, but fervent return of thanks. Secondly, the example of Raguel and Anna teaches Christian parents that it is one of their most important obligations to present their fervent supplications to God in behalf of their children, and make it their great

concern not to provide earthly riches for them, but to render them rich in virtue and goodness, by holy instruction, good example, and fervent prayer for them. Raguel having thus given the first emotions of his heart, on the news of Tobias's safety, to the holy office of prayer and thanksgiving, expressed outwardly the joy which he felt, in a feast to which he invited his friends.

Ver. 20. And immediately, (says the sacred text) Raguel commanded his servants to fill up the pit they had made, before it was day.....*21.* And he spoke to his wife to make ready a feast, and prepare all kinds of provisions that are necessary for such as go a journey.....*22.* He caused also two fat kine and four wethers to be killed and a banquet to be prepared for all his neighbours and all his friends.....*23.* And Raguel adjured Tobias to abide with him two weeks.....*24.* And of all things which Raguel possessed, he gave one half to Tobias, and made a writing, that the half that remained should after their decease, come also to Tobias.

My Christian brethren, when the feasts of the Church of God call upon you to express your joy at the triumphs of your Redeemer and his Saints, and your gratitude for the blessings of heaven, let the outward mirth which you testify in the entertainment of your friends, be, as it ought to be, a sincere token of the inward rejoicing and thank-giving of your hearts. "Rejoice," as the Apostle says, "in the Lord;" making it your principal care on these holy festivals, by humble confession, devout communion, and fervent prayer, to sanctify your souls, and merit a continuance of the divine mercy.

TWENTIETH HOMILY.

Chap. IX. ver. 1. Then Tobias called the Angel to him, whom he took to be a man, and said to him: Brother Azarias, I pray thee hearken to my words.....2. If I should give myself to be thy servant, I should not make a worthy return for thy care..... 3. However, I beseech thee to take with thee beasts and servants, and go to Gabelus to Rages, the city of the Medes: and to return him his note of hand, and receive of him the money, and desire him to come to my wedding..... 4. For, thou knowest that my father numbereth the days: and if I stay one day more, his soul will be afflicted.. ...5. And indeed thou seest how Raguel hath adjured me, whose adjuring I cannot despise.

THE young Tobias had left home in obedience to the advice of his aged father, in order to recover a sum of money which his father had lent to his kinsman Gabelus. This, therefore, was the principal object of his journey, and it appears to have been the principal subject of his thoughts and concern, to acquit himself with fidelity of the trust reposed in him. Hitherto, indeed, he had been occupied with his marriage, because he felt it his duty to obey in this respect the directions of his guide. Though not as yet sensible that his conductor belonged to a superior order of beings, he was satisfied that his guide was sent him by an all-ruling Providence, and consequently that to obey him was to obey the voice of heaven. But having fulfilled this obligation of obedience in what related to his marriage, the thoughts of his aged parents, and the trust they had given him, again occupy all his care and attention. Fearful lest he himself should meet with some unexpected difficulty too strong to be surmounted, or lest he should not succeed to his father's wishes, he applies for assistance to his faithful guide Azarias, from whom he had already received so much comfort, such excellent advice and direction. Were Christians as diligent under their spiritual diffi-

culties, in having recourse for counsel to the guide and director of their souls, like Tobias's, their humility and obedience would secure the blessing of heaven, in providing them with the helps necessary for their advancement in the path of virtue, and for removing the obstacles thrown in their way by the malice of the devil.

Next to the obedience which the young Tobias shews to his guide, we may admire his gratitude, a quality which forms a distinguishing feature in his character. In addressing Azarias, he seems to want words to express how full his heart was of grateful feelings for the kind attention of his guide, and says, that if he were even to become the servant of Azarias, it would be a small return for the favours which he had received. Gratitude is so amiable a quality of the heart, that wherever it is found, it renders its possessor an object of esteem and veneration to all who know him; while, on the other hand, ingratitude fixes an indelible mark of odium and disgrace on the wretch whose conduct manifests him capable of so much infamy. I speak now of the transactions of mankind with one another. But, if we raise our thoughts still higher, how truly amiable and pleasing is gratitude in the sight of the Supreme Being, and how amply does he reward it! The lives of the Saints of God point out to us, on the one hand, some of our fellow-creatures, sensible of the goodness of their Creator, offering him in return the acceptable tribute of a grateful heart, and proving their gratitude by a faithful correspondence with the favours received; on the other hand, they are the history of the continued and increasing bounties of a God, pleased with the gratitude of his creatures, and heaping upon them in return new and more abundant mercies. But what a reproach is this grateful conduct of the Saints to the greater part of Christians! Like the Saints, we profess indeed with our lips that we are indebted to the

bounty of our heavenly Father for the daily blessings we receive; but how little do our lives correspond with this profession? How seldom are our hearts raised up in gratitude to the Author of all our good! How small a portion of our time is given to the service of Him, to whose goodness we are indebted for each moment of our existence? But a few years ago, my beloved brethren, you were void of sense, of life, or even existence, beneath the very meanest object that serves to make up the admirable variety of the creation. That same Almighty Being who framed the universe, who is himself unchangeably and eternally happy, whose throne surrounded by millions that partake of his glory, and incessantly honour, praise, and adore the Author of their bliss, has selected you, to bless you with a being exalted far above that of the visible objects that surround you, and stamped with his own image, the pledge of its happy destiny to an eternal union with its Creator, and a share in his immense and never-ending happiness. Did this Almighty Being stand in need of you? Would his glory have been diminished, or his happiness have been less, had he not called you into existence? No.—It was love for you, which directed the voice that called you into being, which guided the omnipotent arm that framed you, and breathed into your souls that breath of life which bespeaks them destined for an union with their Creator in eternal bliss. Oh! infinite goodness of God, how little do men think of the!—But, my beloved brethren, this blessing of your creation is not confined to the instant in which you were first called into existence. It extends to every moment of your lives; it is renewed each instant, and continued in the preservation of your being by the same almighty power that created it; a preservation which is justly called a fresh, a continual creation.—Yet, at this moment, when I am pressing these truths upon your minds for your consideration, conscience perhaps flies in your face, and re-

proaches you with a strange forgetfulness of your Creator, a surprising ingratitude for his benefits. Few of us but may cry out with St. Augustine after his conversion, "Too late have I known thee, O ancient truth! too late have I loved thee, O ancient beauty!" Oh! that like this great Saint, the model of true penitents, you may repair your past neglect and ingratitude by spending the remainder of your lives with fidelity in the service of your Creator!

Were the motives which call for your gratitude to your bountiful God, confined to your creation, the being which he has given you, and the end for which it was bestowed upon you, a life faithfully dedicated to that God would be but a small return for his mercies. How infinitely then does the obligation of your gratitude increase upon you, when you turn your thoughts to the mystery of your redemption. He who created you, beheld you, from the throne of his glory, victims of his just indignation, doomed to an eternal exclusion from his kingdom, condemned to an eternity of misery forlorn and without hope. Impelled by love for you, he clothes himself with the weakness of your flesh; submits himself to poverty, ignominy, and contempt; suffers himself to be treated as the very outcast of mankind; bears in his sacred body the torments due to your sins; expiates your crimes by the effusion of his blood; and dies in an agony of sufferings, to reconcile you to your offended Creator. This his love for you is the astonishment of the Spirits that surround his throne of glory, and calls forth their eternal praise and thanksgiving. But man, for whom was wrought this mystery of love, ungratefully forgets it. The sufferings of his Redeemer seldom form the subject of his thoughts; the greater part are of the number of those, of whose ingratitude the Redeemer complains by the prophet: Psalm cxli, "I looked at my right-hand and beheld, and there was no one that would acknowledge me."

Not content with giving himself once a victim of propitiation for you by his death upon the cross, he continues daily to present you with the fruits of his redemption. In heaven he continually makes intercession for you, presenting his sacred wounds to his eternal Father in your behalf. On earth he has established his Church as a light to guide you in the path that leads to the possession of his glory, and has enriched her with those treasures of grace that were purchased at the price of his blood, and are appointed by him to be the strength, the comfort, and support of your souls during their mortal pilgrimage. Look around you, my beloved brethren, and view the thousands of your unhappy fellow-creatures, who, brought up in infidelity, ignorance and error, are strangers to the light of the true faith which God has made to shine upon *you*, and to the blessings which you enjoy in the communion of the Catholic Church. Could I persuade you, after thus calling your attention to these general blessings, to review your past lives, and bring before your eyes the unnumbered blessings, both for time and eternity, for soul and body, which the boundless goodness of your God has daily poured out upon each of you individually; the accidents from which he has preserved you; the graces with which he has helped you; and all this, perhaps, at the very time when you have been his enemies by sin, and undeserving of his goodness, what an immense debt of gratitude would immediately present itself before you, as due to your Creator! How severe would be the reproaches of your conscience for your past thoughtlessness and neglect to discharge this debt! But, alas! how much more enormous will this debt appear, and how infinitely more terrible will be the reproaches of conscience in the awful moment of death, when the goodness of God shall display itself to you in its full splendour, and your own ungrateful forgetfulness of his mercies shall present itself in its blackest deformity! From this day,

then, let the benefits which you have received from God be the subject of your daily meditation, and meet with a daily tribute of heart-felt thanksgiving to the bounty of your Creator. The royal prophet declares, that he will sing the praises of his God each day of his existence; and invites the whole universe to unite its voice in proclaiming the bounty of his Creator. His Psalms, full of every sentiment that piety can suggest, are principally hymns of praise and thanksgiving, abounding with the grateful expressions of a heart whose constant delight and occupation was to contemplate the riches of God's mercy, and raise itself in spirit to the blessed choirs above, who sing without ceasing the praises of the Almighty. Like this holy prophet and faithful servant of God, do you, my beloved brethren make it your frequent, I would say, your *daily* occupation, to recite some part of the Psalms, or at least to pour forth the pious effusions of your own hearts in gratitude to Him who daily bestows so many of his best blessings upon you. Your fidelity in this practice will be a happy mark of your being destined one day to join the happy company of those who in the heavenly Jerusalem know no other employment or happiness than to sing eternal hymns of praise, adoration, and thanksgiving, to the Deity.

But to return to the history of Tobias. The holy Scripture informs us, that Tobias, after thanking his guide, whom he did not yet know to be an Angel, for past favours, requested a fresh proof of his kindness and attention, by soliciting him to undertake a journey to Rages, and recover the sum of money which his father had lent to Gabelus. The angel Raphael, without any hesitation, complied with the request, and immediately set out for Rages, as the sacred text thus relates;

Ver. 6. Then Raphael took four of Raguel's servants, and two camels, and went to Rages, the city of the Medes, and finding Gabelus, gave him his note of hand, and received of him all the money.....7. And he told him concerning Tobias, the son of Tobias, all that had been done, and made him come with him to the wedding.

The holy Scripture now introduces to our notice, another servant of God, Gabelus. From what had before been said of him by the elder Tobias, we were enabled to learn that Gabelus was a man of upright character. On the present occasion, the sacred writer says but little of him, but that little is sufficient to discover to us the excellency of his heart and conduct. Honest and just by principle, Gabelus embraces with joy the opportunity now offered him of repaying the money which his friend and kinsman had lent him, and of testifying, at the same time, his esteem for Tobias, and his regard for his kinsman. No less just in giving to God that which belonged to him, Gabelus manifests a great piety and sense of the divine goodness, and ascribes every blessing to the divine bounty. Thus does this holy man furnish us with an example of that two-fold justice which combines to form the character of the true Christian, justice towards God, and justice towards our neighbours. To be just towards God, we must faithfully consecrate to him the powers and faculties of the being which he has bestowed upon us, paying to him with fidelity our homage of morning and evening devotion, making him the end of all our actions, and diligently walking in the path of his holy commandments. To be just to our neighbour, we must carefully regulate our conduct by that golden rule of doing to others as we would have them do to us. By this rule all our thoughts, words, and actions, as far as they regard our fellow-creatures, will one day be examined at the tribunal of our sovereign Judge, and every deviation from it will be enregistered against us as an injustice, hateful in the sight of God, who, as the Psalmist assures us, Psalm xliv, "loveth justice,

and hateth injustice." The maxims and practice of worldlings, under cover of which too many Christians frame to themselves a false conscience, and by which they pretend to justify their frauds, over-reachings, and deceits, will then be of no avail. All will be examined by the plain simple rule of doing as we would be done to. Gabelus was fully sensible of his duty in this respect, and having borrowed a sum of money of his friend, was careful not to squander it in idleness, pride, or excess. This he knew would have been an injustice that would have for ever excluded him from a share in the inheritance of the just. He employed the money which Tobias had lent him, in some honest, industrious way of business, and carefully laid by what Providence enabled him to save by his labour, till an opportunity should offer of returning the whole sum to his friend. His upright and honest intentions drew down a blessing from heaven upon his temporal concerns. But how severely does his conduct reproach those unjust Christians, who either unlawfully detain the property of others, or take no pains to restore it; who, by their idleness or evil habits, involve themselves and their families in debt; or, when already involved, use no endeavour to extricate themselves. In vain will such persons cry out for mercy at the tribunal of God; the cry of their injustices will ascend before God, and their lot will be among those of whom St. Paul speaks when he says, that no unjust person shall enter into the kingdom of God. Frequently then, my beloved brethren, examine your conduct towards your neighbour by the gospel precept, correct every past deviation from it, and avoid for the future every, even the least wilful transgression of it.

Gabelus having taken up his note of hand, accepted of the young Tobias's invitation, and accompanied the Angel to the wedding.

Ver. 8. And when he was come into Raguel's house, he found Tobias sitting at the table: and he leaped up and they kissed each other: and Gabelus wept and blessed God,.....9. And said: The God of Israel bless thee, because thou art the son of a very good and just man, and that feareth God, and doth alms-deeds:.....10. And may a blessing come upon thy wife, and upon your parents:.....11. And may you see your children, and your children's children, unto the third and fourth generation: and may your seed be blessed by the God of Israel, who reigneth for ever and ever.....12. And when all had said Amen, they went to the feast, but the marriage-feast they celebrated also with the fear of the Lord.

When Gabelus entered the house of Raguel, Tobias rose up from table, as a mark of respect for the virtues of his character, and embraced him with affection. Gabelus wept for joy at the sight of his kinsman's son, and the thought of the wonderful goodness of God towards him. As soon as his feelings would permit, he expressed the pious emotions in a hearty thanksgiving to God for past mercies, and a fervent supplication for a continuance of the divine blessing to Tobias and his family, even to their latest posterity. How admirable are the simplicity and piety of this holy company! God is ever present to their thoughts; to bless his holy name seems to be their greatest delight, their constant and favourite occupation. To him they look for every blessing; him they consider as the author of all the happiness which they enjoy; to him they present their sincere thanksgiving. Their good wishes to each other, are so many prayers addressed to the bountiful Giver of all good gifts. Gabelus expresses these holy sentiments, and the rest of this pious family confirm them by devoutly answering Amen; a model for Christians in the great and holy duty of family prayer. After their prayers, these holy Israelites sit down to the marriage-feast with the fear of the Lord. No excess, no drunkenness, no evil conversation, disgraces their mirth; the presence of God fills their thoughts, to whom their hearts are directed; all their joy is sanctified by a pure intention, moderation, and holy discourse. Their feast is an emblem of that eternal feast which the elect enjoy in the kingdom of their God.

TWENTY-FIRST HOMILY.

Chap. X. ver. 1 But as Tobias made longer stay upon occasion of the marriage, Tobias, his father, was solicitous, saying: Why, thinkest thou, doth my son tarry, or why is he detained there?.....2. Is Gabelus dead, thinkest thou, and no man will pay him the money?.....3. And he began to be exceeding sad, both he and Anna his wife with him: and they began both to weep together, because their son did not return to them on the day appointed.

THE young Tobias, yielding to the pressing solicitations of his father-in-law, consented to spend a fortnight after his marriage at Raguel's house. His parents, not seeing him return at the time appointed, began to be anxious for his safety, and knew not how to account for his stay. His father, notwithstanding his great virtue and confidence in the divine protection, felt his mind quite overpowered with grief, and could hardly support his affliction. His son, whom he looked upon as his only comfort under the trials that had befallen him, seemed now lost to him, and he became exceedingly sad. The anxiety, the grief and tears of this holy servant of God, so full of faith and piety, discover to us that the most holy persons are not exempt from the weaknesses of human nature. Almighty God permits this, that his servants, sensible of their weakness, may never presume upon their own strength and courage, but may remember that all their sufficiency and force come from God. Did we behold the Saints on all occasions firm, intrepid, without any sentiments of fear, without anxiety or weakness, we should be inclined to look upon them as a superior order of beings, whose example it would be in vain for us to attempt to imitate. Under the trials which Providence appoints for our mortal pilgrimage, we should want the encouragement and help to virtue which we derive

from the example of the faithful servants of God who have trod the path of affliction before us. But when we see even the chosen friends of God sometimes sinking under the weakness of nature, and experiencing the same feelings as ourselves, we feel encouraged not to yield to despondency, but to bear up with hope, relying on the same divine arm which strengthened them, and enabled them to triumph in the end. Virtue does not extinguish, but she regulates and tempers the feelings of nature, teaching us to make, even of our imperfections, so many steps to heaven, by humility, and the confession of our own weakness. Thus the grief and anxiety of Tobias were merely passing emotions of his mind. Faith, which was deeply rooted in his heart, soon lifted him above his momentary dejection, and restored the calmness and tranquillity of his mind. After a momentary expression of the feelings which attempted to draw him aside from the path of hope, he turns his thoughts to the goodness of his God, and animates himself with confidence in the divine protection. Fully persuaded that his son had left home under the direction of a guide sent by God himself, he feels assured of his happy and safe return. Gaining strength from his momentary weakness, he suppresses his own grief, and attempts to dry up the tears of his wife. Happy would it have been for her, if she had been blessed with the like strong faith, and the same holy dispositions, as her husband!

Ver. 4. But she (his mother) wept, and was quite disconsolate, and said: Woe, woe is me, my son, why did we send thee to go to a strange country, the light of our eyes, the staff of our old age, the comfort of our life, the hope of our posterity.....5. We, having all things together in thee alone, ought not to have let thee go from us.....6. And Tobias said to her: Hold thy peace, and be not troubled, our son is safe; that man, with whom we sent him, is very trusty.....7. But she could by no means be comforted, but daily running out, looked round about, and went into all the ways, by which there seemed any hope he might return, that she might, if possible, see him coming afar off.

In all that the holy Scripture here relates of the grief of Anna, and the manner of her expressing it, we discover an exact picture of human nature in the greatest distress. In what feeling language does she unbosom her anguished heart! How eloquent does affliction render her! Her every word bespeaks the tenderness of a fond mother, overwhelmed with grief at the thought of her having lost her only son! Her past experience of the goodness of God, and the holy example of her husband, ought to have consoled her, and raised her from the dejection into which she had sunk. But, alas! void of that solid faith and those principles of religion, which formed the character of Tobias, she is the victim of despondency, and appears without consolation, and even without hope. In her, nature alone acts as guide; and what is human nature in the hour of trial, without the aid of religion? A weak, deceitful, and pernicious guide, which does not even permit us to see the path that would lead us to happiness, which strews with fresh thorns the rugged way of affliction, robs us of comfort, and deprives us of that present merit and future reward which are the happy fruits that religion teaches us to expect from the crosses and afflictions ordained for our journey through this vale of tears. In vain does Tobias endeavour to console his wife, and make her a partaker of his own sources of comfort and hope. In vain does he impart to her the inward confidence which animates his breast, that his son is under the guidance of Providence. In vain does he assure her, as if inspired by God with the knowledge of it, that his son is safe, and conjure her to banish her uneasiness and alarm. She could not be comforted, because her heart was a stranger to those principles of religion which formed the solid foundation of her husband's virtue. How strikingly does this contrast of disposition and conduct in Tobias and Anna prove to us, that our present comfort and welfare, no less than our future happiness, are

closely connected with a steady adherence to the principles of religion! To pass through this life without trials is not to be expected; happy, therefore, is that Christian, who, during the time of tranquillity and peace, fortifies his mind against the hour of trial, by imprinting deeply in his soul those principles which will enable him to meet his afflictions as the appointments of a fatherly Providence, and to turn them into so many blessings for eternity, by receiving them with cheerful submission to the will of heaven. Viewing our afflictions in the light in which religion places them before us, and sanctifying them by the holy dispositions in which she directs us to embrace them, we shall, like the aged Tobias, find comfort even under the severest of trials; and not, like Anna, be left destitute of consolation and of hope.

Ver. 8. But Raguel said to his son-in-law: Stay here, and I will send a messenger to Tobias thy father, that thou art in health.....

9. And Tobias said to him: I know that my father and mother now count the days, and their spirit is grievously afflicted within them.....10. And when Raguel had pressed Tobias with

many words, and he by no means would hearken to him, he delivered Sarah unto him, and half of all his substance, in men-servants and women-servants, in cattle, in camels, and in kine, and in much money, and sent him away safe and joyful from him.....11. Saying: The holy Angel of the Lord be with you in your journey, and bring you through safe, and that you may find all things well about your parents, and my eyes may see your children before I die.....12. And the parents taking their daughter, kissed her and let her go:.....13. Admonishing her to honour her father and mother-in-law, to love her husband, to take care of the family, to govern well the house, and to behave herself without blame.

Raguel, charmed with the virtues of his son-in-law, was anxious to detain him a little longer than the fortnight which he had consented to stay. But Tobias, having fulfilled the business upon which he had been sent by his aged parents, and knowing how uneasy they would feel during his absence from home, was determined not to delay his return any longer without

necessity. As a proof of his affectionate regard and dutiful submission to his father-in-law, he had complied with Raguel's request, and spent a fortnight after his marriage at his house. This was a respect which he considered due to his father-in-law. But he felt the claim which his own aged parents had to his attention, and he was now resolved to lose no time in administering comfort to them, by his presence at home. When pressed by Raguel to remain a little longer with him, he modestly suggested the affliction which any further delay would occasion to his parents, and expressed his fixed determination to set out upon his journey towards home. Raguel, seeing his resolution, consented to his departure, and delivered to him one half of his substance, according to the promise which he had made. On parting with his son-in-law, Raguel prayed that the Angel of the Lord might be with him on his journey, and conduct him home in safety. The elder Tobias had prayed for the same blessing upon his son, when he was leaving home. The prayers of these holy men clearly shew, that the faith of the ancient patriarchs respecting the ministry of Angels was religiously preserved among the Israelites; that this truth was ever present to their minds, and had a powerful and becoming influence upon their actions. From God alone they looked for succour and blessing, both for themselves and their friends; but they confidently expected that it was by the ministry of Angels this succour and this blessing would be bestowed upon them.

Truly affecting is the tender farewell which Raguel and his wife take of their daughter and her husband. Truly important and instructive is the advice which they give to Sarah; they make use of but few words, but those few words contain in substance every counsel that is proper for a young woman just entered into the married state. They "admonish her to honour her father and mother-in-law, to love her husband, to take care of her family, to govern well her house, and to

behave herself without blame." ver. 13. They speak not of her duty to God: in this point they are confident she will not be deficient. They had trained her in the path of virtue from her infancy, and they had witnessed the happy fruits of their labours in her advancing age; they had seen her constant and fervent in her devotions to God, and affectionately obedient to their own orders during the years which she had passed under her parent's roof; they doubt not, therefore, that she will continue during her whole life to be guided by the same principles, in these branches of duty. But they now behold their daughter entering into a new state of life bringing with it the most important obligations; upon the faithful discharge of which they know that her own happiness, and that of her family, will principally depend. It is too true, that few Christian parents think of pointing out these obligations to their children at the proper time; and few young persons, when they enter into matrimony, seem sensible that such obligations are attached to their state. But it is not so with those who are really servants of God; who are Christians, not merely in name, but in practice; and who are really desirous of pleasing God during life, of enjoying him after death, and of meeting their children in the realms of bliss. Like Raguel and Anna, they not only teach their families the general duties of prayer, of charity, and justice, and of abstaining from sin; they not only fulfil their own obligations, but in settling their children in the world, look principally to the sanctification and salvation of their souls, and hence are careful to impress upon their minds the obligation of studying and practising the respective duties attached to the state of life which they embrace. For, as an eminent servant of God (Bishop Challoner) observes, true sanctity, or holiness of life, does not consist in performing any extraordinary actions, but in performing the ordinary duties of our calling extraordinarily well; that is, with a pure

motive of pleasing God, and in the best possible manner. The wisdom of divine Providence has permitted different stations in life, none of which he excludes from a title to everlasting life, so long as there is nothing in them which is incompatible with the maxims of the gospel. Sanctity then, is not confined to any one state of life, but is attainable in all states. The lives of the Saints who have gone before us in the path of virtue, inform us, that there is not a single station in life, from the throne to the cottage, which has not been adorned by the practice of Christian virtue, and, consequently, which has not produced Saints. But every state of life has certain peculiar duties attached to it, which form its most essential obligations, and on the practice of which depends the eternal happiness of those who are engaged in it. It is possible then, and not unfrequently the case, that Christians may be very regular and exemplary as to the practice of certain general duties, such as morning and evening prayer, attending at mass, frequenting the sacraments, &c. and at the same time be very ignorant of, and very deficient in the practice of the very obligations on the discharge of which their claim to eternal life depends. Unacquainted with these obligations, they go on in the same beaten track which they see trodden by others who are reputed good Christians: in approaching to the sacraments, they examine their consciences only as to general duties; and finding no reproach on those points, they pursue their usual course under the confidence of a false security, and thus live and die in the neglect of many important obligations. This fatal ignorance, and this neglect of the duties of their state of life, will prove the exclusion of many from the kingdom of God, who, though wearing the appearance of Saints in the eyes of men, in the sight of God will stand condemned of a gross and criminal violation of their most important obligations, as husbands, wives, parents, pastors, masters, servants, &c.

I cannot then, my beloved brethren, impress too strongly upon your minds, how much it is incumbent upon you to study well what are the obligations of that state of life in which you are placed; to examine with rigid nicety, when you go to confession, your conduct in fulfilling those obligations; to attend to the advice of your director on this important point; and to make it your principal care, after receiving the sacraments, to discharge with greater exactness and fidelity the duties of your calling. Thus you will truly become good Christians, servants of God, and followers of his Saints. In these holy persons, the great principle of their sanctity was their strict attention to the duties of their station. The same principle, as we see in the example before us of Raguel and Anna, they instilled into their children.

In the advice which these holy persons give to their daughter, they confine themselves to her duties as a wife, the mistress of a family; and the advice is deserving the attention of young married women. First, they admonish her to honour her father and mother-in-law; to pay them, even in old age and infirmity, attention, respect, and reverence; to shew them that kind and affectionate deference, with which nature directs children to repay the love and the tenderness of their parents, considering the parents of her husband as her own, being no longer but one in heart and affection with him. Secondly, they admonish her to love her husband with a love of tenderness, respect, and submission. Oh! how much does the happiness of married persons depend upon their cherishing a mutual affection; an affection, which can be preserved only by husband and wife, studying to learn each other's inclination, to avoid what would displease or aggravate, and cheerfully to perform that which they know will give pleasure to their partner. Thirdly, they admonish Sarah to take care of her family, to remember that the souls of her children and servants would be en-

trusted to her charge, to see them punctual in the fulfilment of their religious duties, to instruct them in the truths of salvation, to watch over heir morals, to give them an edifying example, and not to neglect any thing which might contribute to turn them from evil and lead them to good. Lastly, they admonish her to govern well her household, by good management, order, and regularity in all her domestic concerns; and to keep herself without blame, by a holy and irreproachable life, in all chastity, mildness, gentleness, and a general prudence of conduct, so exemplary as to form the comfort of her husband, the happiness of her family, and the edification of her neighbour. St. Paul, in his Epistle to Titus, chap. ii. ver. 4. gives nearly the same advice to young women, "to love their husbands and families, to be discreet, chaste, sober, having a care of the house, gentle, obedient to their husbands, that the word of God may not be blasphemed." Let all in the married state consider this advice as addressed to themselves, and regulate their lives by it.

TWENTY-SECOND HOMILY.

Chap. XI. ver. 1. And as they were returning, they came to Charan, which is in the midway to Ninive, the eleventh day.....
2. And the Angel said: Brother Tobias, thou knowest how thou didst leave thy father.....3. If it please thee, therefore, let us go before, and let the family follow softly after us, together with thy wife, and thy beasts.....4. And as this their going pleased him, Raphael said to Tobias: Take with thee the gall of the fish, for it will be necessary. So Tobias took some of that gall, and departed.

THE young Tobias having taken leave of his father and mother-in-law, lost no time in making the best of his way home. When he had advanced half way on his journey, the angel Raphael, knowing the anxiety which his aged parents felt on account of the long absence of their son, proposed to Tobias to hasten forwards with himself, leaving his wife and the rest of his family to follow after by slower journeys. At the same time, Raphael reminded Tobias to take with him a part of the gall of the fish, which God designed to make the instrument of his mercy towards his aged father. Guided by a spirit of docility, and obedient in all things to the advice of his conductor, Tobias obeyed without hesitation the directions which the Angel gave him, and went forward with him. No earthly tie, not even his strong affection for his virtuous wife, could shake the steady determination of his mind to walk in the path of humble obedience, or induce him to prefer his own will before what he believed to be the will of God. As he was drawing near to his home,

Ver. 7. Raphael said to Tobias: As soon as thou shalt come into thy house, forthwith adore the Lord thy God: and giving thanks to him, go to thy father and kiss him.....8. And immediately anoint his eyes with this gall of the fish which thou carriest with thee. For be assured that his eyes shall be presently opened, and thy father shall see the light of heaven, and shall rejoice in the sight of thee.

The Angel advises Tobias as soon as he enters his father's house, to let the duties of religion be his first concern, to pour forth his heart in fervent adoration to God, and thank him for his gracious protection during his journey. Such is the conduct which true piety points out to those in whose breasts it dwells. The greatest Saints have made it their constant practice to follow this rule through the course of their lives. The great St. Benedict, in the rule which he gave to his monks, ordained that when they received strangers at their convents, they should first conduct them to the Church to perform a short act of devotion. Indeed, as God is the first beginning and the last end of all things, to him we should consecrate the beginning and the end of all our actions. This should form a part of our morning devotions each day of our existence; and lest, through the hurry of worldly business, or the fascinating allurements of earthly pleasures, our minds should lose sight of this obligation of making God the beginning and end of all that we do; lest any want of a pure intention of the divine glory, should vitiate our actions and rob them of their claim to a future reward, we should be careful, like the Saints of God, to renew frequently in our minds a sense of the divine presence, and repeat the offering of our actions and employments to our Creator. Besides, we are at each moment of our lives in the midst of a host of dangers which threaten us, and from which nothing but the omnipotent power and unbounded goodness of the Deity can deliver us. Placed then each instant under the most weighty obligations to God for past favours, and depending upon him each moment for future mercy, our lives, if possible, should form one continued act of adoration, thanksgiving, and supplication. The Church of God, sensible of this duty, has consecrated the different parts of the day to prayer; appointing her ministers, at what are termed the canonical hours, to fulfil this sacred duty, and inviting her children frequently to unite in the same holy exercise.

The history of the Church in its state of primitive fervour informs us how attentive the first Christians were to the duty of frequent prayer. If any business, or a journey, prevented them from assisting on the week-days at public prayer in the house of God, they failed not to pray at the appointed times, which were every three hours. To renew more frequently in their minds a sense of the divine presence, and to fulfil as nearly as they possibly could the advice of Jesus Christ, who exhorts us to pray always, they offered up a short prayer before every action of the day. The precept of St. Paul to the Colossians was constantly in their thoughts, "Whatsoever ye do in word or in work, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, giving thanks to God and the Father through him." Col. iii. 17. Their daily labours, whether in the field or in the shop, were begun and ended with prayer. Their acts of devotion throughout the day were all accompanied with the sign of the cross, as an expression of their faith, a pledge of their hope, and a token of their love and gratitude. Tertullian, one of the earliest Christian writers, tells us, that the first Christians used this holy sign of their redemption at almost every moment, particularly whenever they went out of their houses or came in, when they dressed or undressed, when they sat down to their meals or rose up from them. Let it be remembered too, that the Christians who were thus constant in prayer and in the use of the sign of the cross, lived in the midst of reviling Jews and insulting Pagans, who ridiculed and despised the religion of Christ, and persecuted such as professed it. Yet the first Christians, notwithstanding the contempt, the taunts, and the cruelties of their adversaries, persevered with unshaken constancy in the profession of their faith, and in a steady adherence to the practices and ceremonies sanctioned by the Catholic Church. Let their piety be your model; guided by the same spirit, raise up

your hearts frequently during the day to Almighty God, and implore his blessing, more especially when undertaking any business of importance, when going a journey or returning from it. These, and the like holy practices, will draw down the divine blessing upon *your going out and coming in*, (Psalm cxx.) and will merit the protection of heaven at every step which you take.

The holy Scripture, after detailing to us the directions which Raphael gave the young Tobias on his drawing near to his father's house, relates this affectionate meeting with his parents, in a style of simplicity which is truly affecting, and which far surpasses all the embellishments that the pen of the brightest genius could bestow.

Ver. 5. But Anna (his mother) sat beside the way daily, on the top of a hill, from whence she might see afar off.....6. And while she watched his coming from that place, she saw him afar off, and presently perceived it was her son coming, and returning she told her husband, saying: Behold, thy son cometh.....9. Then the dog which had been with them in the way, ran before, and coming as if he had brought the news, shewed his joy by his fawning and wagging his tail.....10. And his father that was blind, rising up, began to run, stumbling with his feet: and giving a servant his hand, went to meet his son.....11. And receiving him, kissed him, as did also his wife, and they began to weep for joy.

Nothing can exceed the admirable and affecting simplicity of this narrative. The majesty of the sacred writings does not consist in the pomp of human eloquence, but in an inimitable simplicity of style and expression, which at once strikes the imagination and affects the heart. The grief and regret of a fond mother, whose impatient anxiety leads her daily to the top of some hill to look for her darling son; the haste with which she runs, as soon as she perceives her son, to impart the joyful tidings to her husband; the eagerness with which the old man, notwithstanding his blindness, rises from his seat, and runs to meet his son,

stumbling at every step he takes; these are traits of inimitable beauty, and form a truly interesting and affecting tale. That nothing might be wanting to complete this sketch of nature in its most agreeable form of unadorned simplicity, the holy Scripture mentions the affection and fidelity of the little dog which had accompanied the young Tobias on his journey. What the sacred text relates of this circumstance may at first sight appear too low and trifling, but we are not to judge of the works of God by what appears little or great in our ideas. All the works of the Deity are admirable in themselves; and oftentimes those which seem the most mean and contemptible, are most deserving of our attention and admiration. The beauties of nature, even in its minutest parts, are frequently noticed by the royal Prophet with a sublimity of expression that fills the soul with the most exalted notions of the power, wisdom, and goodness of the Creator; and points out to us, even in the meanest of God's works, subjects of astonishment, admiration, praise, and thanksgiving. The dog is one of the most common of our domestic animals, he diverts us with his fond caresses, guards our house with fidelity, is grateful for favours, and immoveable in his attachment to his master. Yet, endowed with these properties, or, if I may so express myself, blessed with these animal virtues, he is not possessed of a soul as we are, nor has in him a principle of immortality. But, too often do we find even in this animal, an affection, a gratitude, a fidelity, which we in vain look for in man, though gifted by his divine Master with an immortal soul, bearing in itself the image of its Creator, and destined for an eternal union with him.

Ver. 12. And when they had adored God, and given him thanks, they sat down together.... 13. Then Tobias, taking of the gall of the fish, anointed his father's eyes..... 14. And he stayed about half an hour: and a white skin began to come out of his eyes, like the skin of an egg..... 15. And Tobias took hold of it, and drew it from his eyes, and immediately he recovered his sight 16. And they glorified God, both he and his wife, and all that knew him..... 17. And Tobias said: I bless thee, O Lord God of Israel, because thou hast chastised me, and thou hast saved me, and behold I see Tobias my son.

The young Tobias like his father, is the same in prosperity and adversity; nothing can draw him aside from the path of duty. Though overjoyed at seeing again his aged parents, he does not forget the directions of his guide. The angel had told him to make his first act on entering his father's house an act of adoration and gratitude to God for the protection and the blessings which had attended him on his journey. Tobias strictly fulfils this advice, and his parents unite with him in blessing and praising the goodness of God. The Angel had directed Tobias, in the second place, to anoint his father's eyes with the gall of the fish, assuring him that his faith, humility, and obedience, would be rewarded by seeing his aged parent recover his sight. Tobias, the child of docility and obedience, after paying his homage of thanksgiving to God in fervent prayer, applied the gall of the fish, as the Angel had directed, and in half an hour his father recovered his sight. This miracle of the divine power and goodness, called forth an immediate return of gratitude and praise from this holy family. Nor was the tribute of grateful thanksgiving confined to those who lived in Tobias's house; their kinsman and acquaintance joined their hearts and voices in proclaiming the wonders of God's mercy, pouring forth the sentiments of hearts, inflamed with that true charity which both "weeps with those who weep, and rejoices with those who rejoice." The Old Testament, which is the history of the patriarchal and the Jewish Church, is one con-

tinued display of the most astonishing miracles. Sometimes we behold the Deity stretching out his omnipotent arm for the protection or support of his whole people; at other times, exerting his omnipotence in favour of some more chosen individual, distinguished for his virtue. In every page we discover that particular providence, which, even in this life, marks out the just as the objects of God's tender affection, and designates the wicked as the victims of God's indignation. At one time we behold his whole people passing in safety through the waters of the sea; shaded in the desert from the burning heat of the sun during the day; illuminated, during the night, with a pillar of fire: fed with bread from heaven; triumphing over enemies, whose power seemed invincible, and put in possession of a land which the arm of the Almighty had cleared of its original inhabitants, whose numbers and whose strength had struck his people with terror, and to human views appeared irresistible: at other times we behold Angels deputed for the preservation of some more chosen servant of the most High; Lot snatched by their ministry from the flames of Sodom; Abraham receiving by the same means the promise of a son; Elias caught up in a charriot of fire; Daniel seated unhurt and undaunted amidst hungry lions; and Tobias miraculously restored to sight.

In the New Testament, the Son of God is held out to us during the course of his public life, as constantly exerting his infinite power in miraculously conferring benefits upon mankind. He, who was Truth itself, declared that, astonishing as these miracles seemed to the crowds who witnessed them, his followers should be enabled to work wonders that should far surpass them. The history of the Catholic Church attests the fulfilment of this declaration of her Founder, not only in the period of her first establishment and primitive fervour, but in every age, even to our times. The adversaries of our holy faith deny this historical truth,

but upon grounds so contradictory as to destroy their own testimony. Not a single argument can be brought by them against the authentic miracles recorded to have been wrought by the Saints of God in each century, that would not equally invalidate the miracles related in the gospel. Their own religious systems, the mere inventions of men, can bring no proof of miraculous interpositions of divine Providence in their favour, because He who alone can suspend the laws of nature, being Truth itself, will not exert his omnipotence in contradiction to himself, or in confirmation of error. But in vain do they attempt to strip the true spouse of Christ, the Catholic Church, of the splendid light of miracles, with which her divine Founder has invested her, and which is sufficient to discover her to all who sincerely seek her, and who are not afraid of coming to the light. The arm of the Deity is not shortened; but amidst all the storms that assail his Church, and the darkness with which her enemies attempt to hide her, God still miraculously preserves her, enlightens her, and, by the miracles with which he honours some of her illustrious members, declares her to be the work of his omnipotence, his favoured spouse, his chosen inheritance. Oh! that with a heart, like that of the good Tobias, grateful for the divine goodness which has mercifully enlightened our spiritual blindness, and made the light of his true faith to shine upon us, we may daily pay him the homage of our thanksgiving, and by holiness of life endeavour to make our neighbours partakers of our light and joy, that they also may glorify God in the day of visitation!—Tobias, full of joy at the recovery of his sight, praised God even for his past blindness, which he considered as sent him for the purification of his soul, and the perfection of his virtue. His joy, for the blessings conferred on himself and his son, received its accomplishment in the safe arrival of his daughter-in-law, and her servants and possessions.

Ver. 18 And after seven days, Sarah his son's wife, and all the family arrived safe, and the cattle and the camels, and an abundance of money of his wife's; and that money also which he had received from Gabelus.....19. And he told his parents all the benefits of God, which he had done to him by the man that conducted him.....20. And Achoir and Nabath, the kinsmen of Tobias, came rejoicing for Tobias, and congratulating with him, for all the good things that God had done for him.....21. And for seven days they feasted and rejoiced all with great joy.

In prosperity as well as in adversity, the Saints of God look to the hand of Providence as the cause of whatever befalls them. Their joy and their afflictions are like sanctified by the dispositions of a heart ever sensible of the divine goodness, and ever ready to embrace all the appointments of heaven. Tobias, at the safe arrival of his daughter-in-law, renewed his thanksgiving to the Author of all good, and invited his kinsmen, with whose piety he was acquainted to unite with him in grateful acknowledgment to God. During seven days he outwardly expressed his joy and gratitude in entertaining his friends; but his soul continued her unceasing homage of daily acts of gratitude during his mortal life, faithfully fulfilling on earth that happy occupation which will form its eternal employment and delight in the mansions of the blessed.

TWENTY-THIRD HOMILY.

Chap. XII. ver. 1. Then Tobias called to him his son and said to him: What can we give this holy man that is come with thee?....
 2. Tobias answering, said to his father: Father, what wages shall we give him? or what can be worthy of his benefits?.....
 3. He conducted me, and brought me safe again; he received the money of Gabelus; he caused me to have my wife, and he chased from her the evil spirit; he gave joy to her parents; myself he delivered from being devoured by the fish; thee also he hath made to see the light of heaven, and we are filled with all good things through him. What can we give him sufficient for these things?.....
 4. But I beseech thee, my father, to desire him that he would vouchsafe to accept of one half of all things that have been brought.....
 5. So the father and the son, calling him, took him aside; and began to desire him that he would vouchsafe to accept of half of all things that they had brought.

THE elder Tobias, on the return of his son, and the recovery of his sight, made it the first object of his care to express his grateful sense of the mercy of God, by fervent thanksgiving. He invited his relations and friends to unite with him in the same holy exercise. Having fulfilled this obligation, his mind could not rest without making a proper acknowledgment to the faithful guide, tow hom, under God, himself and his son were indebted for so many blessings. He therefore calls his son to open to him his own sentiments, and as his son was best acquainted with what would be agreeable to his guide, to consult with him as to the manner in which they should recompense his services. No one can read the conversation which passed between this holy father and son on this occasion, without being struck with admiration at the sublime and amiable sentiments of gratitude that dwelt in their breasts. The young Tobias, in particular, seems to want words to express his feelings, while he recounts the benefits which himself, his father, his wife, and her parents had received from the faithful Azarias.

Both these holy men, the elder and the younger Tobias, seem at a loss to find out a proper reward for the services of this trusty guide. They confess that it is out of their power to make him an acknowledgment proportioned to his kindness. At last they send for Azarias, and with heartfelt pleasure make him an offer of the one-half of their substance, as the best proof of gratitude their circumstances will afford.

Ver. 6. Then the Angel said to them secretly: Bless ye the God of heaven, give glory to him in the sight of all that live, because he hath shewed his mercy to you.....*7.* For it is good to hide the secret of a king; but honourable to reveal and confess the works of God.....*8.* Prayer is good with fasting and alms, more than to lay up treasures of gold.....*9.* For alms delivereth from death, and the same is that which purgeth from sins, and maketh to find mercy and life everlasting... ..*10.* But they that commit sin and iniquity, are enemies to their own soul.

The time was now come when the veil with which Providence had concealed its ways from its servants was to be drawn aside, and the Angel who had been sent for their comfort and protection was to discover himself to them. To the kind offer which Tobias and his son had made of the one half of their substance, the angel Raphael replies: Bless the God of heaven, and praise him before mankind, for it is to his mercy, and not to me, that you are indebted for the blessings which you have received. The Angel, before he unfolds to them the secret of God's providence towards them, makes them remark the difference between the ways of God and those of earthly sovereigns. The success of the counsels of an earthly prince, depends much upon the fidelity of his ministers in keeping his plans a profound secret; his enemies, by discovering those plans, might prevent their being put in execution: but no power, either in earth or hell, can frustrate the designs of God, or hinder their effect. For his counsels there is no need of secrecy: but, on the contrary, it is a part of the zeal and gratitude which are due

from his servants, to publish to others the wonders of his providence, and proclaim to the world the miracles of his goodness and power, that mankind may glorify him, may learn to put their trust in him, and, by a faithful observance of his law, may merit his protection.

The Angel then confirms Tobias and his son in the faith of certain important truths with which they were before well acquainted, and by which they had regulated their lives. Prayer, says he, is good, when accompanied with fasting and almsdeeds. No earthly riches are worthy to be compared to the eternal treasures which the practice of these virtues brings with it to the soul. If each one of these excellent works is attended with blessings from heaven, how powerfully must their united efficacy tend to disarm God's indignation, to open the door of his mercy, and obtain admission into the kingdom of heaven! These are points, however, upon which I have, in my former instructions, detailed to you at length the maxims, of the divine word. The Angel adds: "they that commit sin and iniquity are enemies to their own soul." The royal Prophet, in the 10th Psalm, delivers the same sentiment: "he that loveth iniquity, hateth his own soul." As sin brings death to the soul, by robbing it of its spiritual life, the grace of God; he who wilfully commits sin, is the enemy and the murderer of his own soul. How frightful is the truth which the holy Scripture delivers in these few words! Who can think of it without horror! The wilful sinner is guilty of a crime which in the language of the Holy Spirit, is a murder; a murder of the worst kind, a murder by which the sinner inflicts upon himself a far more deadly wound than any which could be given him by the hand that should aim a blow for the destruction of the life of his body. Oh! that these words may ever be deeply impressed upon your minds, my beloved brethren: "those who commit iniquity are enemies to their own soul."

The Angel Raphael then discovers himself in the following terms:

Ver. 11. I discover then the truth unto you, and I will not hide the secret from you.....12. When thou didst pray with tears, and didst bury the dead, and didst leave thy dinner, and hide the dead by day in thy house, and bury them by night, I offered thy prayer to the Lord.....13. And because thou wast acceptable to God, it was necessary that temptation should prove thee.....14. And now the Lord hath sent me to heal thee, and to deliver Sarah thy son's wife from the devil.....15. I am the angel Raphael, one of the seven who stand before the Lord.

The Catholic Church has, in every age, inculcated to her children the doctrine which is here delivered to the holy Tobias by an Angel from heaven, which was confirmed by the Son of God, and is expressly mentioned in the creed taught by his inspired Apostles, the doctrine of the Communion of Saints. While the Catholic Church teaches us, that the God who created the universe, and who rules and governs the world which he has created, is the only object of adoration; while she faithfully calls upon her children to pay to the Supreme Being alone, the homage of their faith, hope, charity, and religious worship; she instructs us to honour and respect the happy spirits, whom God himself has honoured by making them partakers of his own glory, and to look to them as our friends at the throne of divine grace, who are continually exerting their kind and powerful influence for us, by prayer and intercession. This doctrine of the Catholic Church is confirmed both by the Old and New Testament, in a variety of passages. What can be a clearer proof of this holy communion which we enjoy with the citizens of the heavenly Jerusalem, than the assurance of the angel Raphael to Tobias: "When thou didst pray with tears, I offered thy prayer to the Lord." Yes, these holy Spirits, who behold their God face to face, and taste those joys which flow from the presence of his majesty, compassionate our weakness;

and knowing the malice of our spiritual enemies, and the dangers which surround us, advocate our cause by their prayers, and supplicate for mercy in our behalf, through the merits of our divine Redeemer. In the New Testament, St. John, in the book of Revelations, tells us, that he saw "an Angel who stood before the altar, having a golden censer; and there was given to him much incense, that he should offer of the prayers of all the Saints, upon the golden altar which is before the throne of God. And the smoke of the incense of the prayers of the Saints ascended up before God from the hand of the Angel." Rev. viii. 3, 4. It is a truth then, attested by the divine word, both in the Old and New Testament, that the Angels present to God the prayers of the faithful: not that we are to suppose that the Deity stands in need of their ministry to know our wants or petitions: but we believe that those holy Spirits, united to us by the bonds of charity, ardently desire our salvation, and joining their prayers to ours, aid us in obtaining from God's mercy the succours necessary for securing our eternal happiness. Faithfully adhering then to the doctrine of the Church, and guided by her spirit, let us ever look up with confidence to the assistance of those friends of the Most High, who are now reigning with him; let us cultivate on earth that holy friendship with them, which will subsist hereafter throughout eternity in heaven; let us imitate their fidelity to God, by a diligent observance of the divine commandments, and we shall both enjoy the benefit of this holy communion upon earth, and reap the fruits of it in their happy society in the world to come. The same holy Scripture, which represent the Angels as so solicitous for our spiritual welfare and so powerfully aiding us by their prayers, represents them as frequently employed in performing offices of charity for the temporal benefit of God's servants. Thus the angel Raphael says, that he was sent by God to deliver Sarah from the power of the

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devil, and to cure the blindness with which divine Providence had afflicted Tobias. This trial, in the order of God's providence, was necessary for the perfection of Tobias's virtue. "Because thou wast agreeable to God, it was necessary that temptation should prove thee." Without the knowledge of this truth, that afflictions are necessary for the just, the conduct of Almighty God towards his servants must be an inexplicable mystery. It is not through a life of ease, of pleasure, and enjoyment, that the Saints are to arrive at eternal bliss. What Jesus Christ, the Saint of Saints, has said of himself, is applicable to all his faithful servants: "It was necessary that the Christ should suffer, and so should enter into his glory." Luke xxiv. 26. All those, therefore, who are mystically united to the body of Christ, as members to their head, must, if they hope to share in his glory, be partakers of his sufferings. This truth is evident from the lives of all the eminent servants of God, both in the Old and the New Law. Abraham, Joseph, David, St. John Baptist, the blessed Virgin, St. Paul, and his fellow Apostles, closely resembled Jesus Christ in his sufferings; and by their sufferings became entitled to a participation of his glory. Afflictions then, so far from dejecting us, ought to fill us with hope and consolation; they are one of the marks of those who are predestined to eternal life. If we are free from trial and persecution, we have reason to tremble for our eternal lot, because we resemble not Jesus Christ and his Saints. But, if we feel the heavy scourge of affliction, we have reason to rejoice and to hope. Let us then make it our daily prayer, not to be dispensed from suffering, but that under our sufferings we may imitate the servants of God in their fidelity, and that the divine will may be ever accomplished in us.

The Angel having explained to Tobias the designs of God's providence in sending him to the assistance of himself and his family, declares his name and his

holy office: "I am the angel Raphael, one of the seven who stand before the Lord." The prophet Daniel represents the majesty of God as seated on a throne of fire, surrounded by millions of blessed Spirits, who continually stand in the presence of their God. But St. John, in the Revelations, chap. i. ver. 4. points out among the heavenly host, seven Spirits, who stand before the throne, the leaders of the celestial army, the most perfect and the most holy of those blessed Spirits whom God employs for the accomplishment of his greatest and most important designs. One of these seven the angel Raphael declares himself to be; and the very mention of his name and dignity fills Tobias and his family with fear and trembling.

Ver. 16. And when they had heard these things, they were troubled; and being seized with fear, they fell upon the ground on their face.....*17.* And the Angel said to them: Peace be to you, fear not.....*18.* For when I was with you, I was there by the will of God: bless ye him, and sing praises to him.....*19.* I seemed indeed to eat and to drink with you; but I use an invisible meat and drink, which cannot be seen by men.....*20.* It is time, therefore, that I return to him that sent me: but bless ye God, and publish all his wonderful works.

We are taught by our divine Redeemer in the Lords' prayer, to petition that we may imitate the blessed Spirits in the readiness and cheerfulness with which they execute the will of God. The angel Raphael, in recalling to Tobias's memory the wonders which God had wrought for him and his family, gives the glory of all the favours, of which he himself had been the instrument, to the sovereign Author of all good. He consoles them; he bids them banish their fears, and think only of the obligation under which they are, of returning their heartfelt praise and thanksgiving to the divine bounty.

"I seemed," says the Angel, "to eat and to drink with you; but I use an invisible meat which cannot be seen by men." We are not to understand from these

words, that the angel Raphael practised any deception, and did not eat and drink in reality. St. Augustine teaches, that the Angels who appeared to the servants of God under a human shape, eat and drank in the same manner as men, but not through any necessity. "The bodies of the just," continues this holy father, "after the general resurrection, being no longer susceptible of hunger or thirst, will not stand in need of corporal food. Clothed with a glorious immortality, they will retain the power, but not the necessity of eating or drinking." In like manner, the holy Angels are recorded in Scripture to have eaten and drank with the servants of God; not that there was any necessity for their so doing, but they complied with these outward natural functions of men, to humanize themselves, and to resemble more closely those for whose service they were sent. But while they were thus employed upon earth in fulfilling the designs for which God had sent them, they ceased not to enjoy the beatific vision of their God, and the happiness of the heavenly Jerusalem. There, satiated with a spiritual and immortal food, with which He who is the eternal truth, infinite light, and immortal wisdom, fills and supports their being, they look down with compassion upon us in this world of misery and sin, they succour us by their powerful aid, and rejoice to be the instruments of divine Providence in furnishing us with those helps that "will enable us to walk faithfully on in the path that will conduct us to a happy and eternal union with them." "I was with you," said Raphael, "by the order of God:" but even then he enjoyed the sight of God, and this was the invisible meat which nourished him.

Ver. 21. And when he had said these things, he was taken from their sight, and they could see him no more.....22. Then they, lying prostrate for three hours upon their face, blessed God, and rising up, they told all his wonderful works.

Having accomplished the important objects for which he had been deputed by divine Providence, the

angel Raphael disappeared from the earth. Tobias and his family, full of admiration and gratitude for the favours conferred by his ministry, fell prostrate on the ground, and in silent adoration, for three hours, poured forth the fervent homage of the heart to that all-bountiful Being who had vouchsafed to send one of the princes of his heavenly court to dispense to them the treasures of his mercy. After this silent and humble thanksgiving, they rose up, not to give their minds to earthly enjoyments, but to publish to their neighbours the wonders of God's goodness, and to manifest to the world their grateful sense of his mercy. Let the like pious exercise form the delight and occupation of your hearts and voices, my beloved brethren, when, having approached to the holy communion, you have received the choicest blessing of heaven, not by the ministry of an Angel, but by the visit of Him who is the joy of Angels, Jesus Christ, your Redeemer, and your God.

TWENTY-FOURTH HOMILY

Chap. XIII. ver. 1. And Tobias the elder opening his mouth, blessed the Lord, and said: Thou art great, O Lord, for ever, and thy kingdom is unto all ages:.....2 For thou scourgest and thou savest; thou leadest down to hell, and bringest up again: and there is none that can escape thy hand.

THE faithful servant of God, Tobias, during the three hours in which he lay prostrate on the ground in silent adoration, gave up his soul to the emotions of gratitude and love, listening with awe and reverence to the interior language of God's holy Spirit within him. At length, no longer able to restrain the flame that was enkindled in his breast by the communications of the holy Spirit, and transported with admiration at the goodness of God towards his own family, and the wonders of his mercy reserved for future ages, Tobias breaks forth in that admirable song, or canticle, which the holy Scripture records in the 13th chapter of his history, and which is one of the most sublime and beautiful passages of holy writ. The first part of it is a solemn act of thanksgiving, in which this virtuous servant of God invites all the children of Israel to unite with them; the second part is a prophecy, in which, under the figurative name of Jerusalem, Tobias, by the direction of the Holy Spirit, foresees and foretells the glory of the Church of Christ, both on earth and in her future triumphant state in heaven.

"Thou art great for ever, O Lord," cries out the holy Tobias, "and thy kingdom is unto all ages."

The thought of the infinite majesty of that God, who had shewn him so many and such extraordinary favours, fills his mind. He is overwhelmed with sentiments of humility, when he considers that the eternal and incomprehensible Deity should have deigned to stoop down to him from the throne of his mercy, and

to send one of his Angels to visit him, and confer blessings upon him. What, my beloved brethren, would be the sentiments of a poor beggar, who should see himself noticed by an earthly prince, treated by him with kindness and attention, relieved in all his wants, and provided with every aid and comfort in time of sickness and distress! Would he not want words to express his grateful sense of the kindness of his princely benefactor? Yet, this benefactor, though a prince, and great in power and in earthly riches, is, like the beggar whom he so generously relieves, a frail mortal, who must one day resign his possessions, and moulder in the dust. His greatness has its bounds, and his power is limited to the duration of a few years. But thy greatness, O God, cries out the faithful Tobias, is infinite, thy power is without bounds, thy empire is universal, thy dominion endures for ever. The lapse of ages, and the revolutions of time, can neither lessen thy power, nor shorten its duration. "What then is man, O Lord, that thou shouldst be mindful of him, or the son of man, that thou shouldst visit him?" Ps. viii. Oh! that such sentiments as these may have their due influence upon our breasts, when we taste of the bounty of this great and beneficent God, more especially when we partake of the choicest of his favours, by receiving him in the holy communion!

"Thou scourgest and thou savest; thou leadest down to hell, and bringest up again; and there is none that can escape thy hand."

God, the sovereign Lord and ruler of the universe, exercises his power with mercy and with justice; he is omnipotent, both to save and to punish. In vain shall the sinner fly from his face; in vain shall he attempt to screen himself from the anger of the Deity; God's infinite vengeance will assuredly overtake him and punish him. The all-piercing eye of the Supreme Being penetrates the thickest darkness, and searches the deepest recesses of the heart. "Shall a man be hid in

secret places, and I not see him, saith the Lord." "Do I not fill the heavens and the earth, saith the Lord?" "Yes," cries out the royal Prophet, "If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there; if I descend into hell, thou are there; if I take wings in the morning, and shall dwell in the uttermost bounls of the sea, even thither thy hand shall lead me, and thy right-hand shall hold me." Psalm cxlix.

There is no one then that can escape the hand of his justice. As God witnesses the crimes of the wicked, their violations of his law, and the insults which they offer to his adorable majesty, he is present with *them* by his infinite justice, to take vengeance on their iniquities. Though the sinner may be seated on the highest pinnacle of worldly grandeur, and surrounded by a herd of flatterers who persuade him that he may indulge his passions without fear, as there is no one to controul or punish him, he shall feel the severity of God's justice, and neither rank nor power shall save him from the hand of God's indignation. But this God, who is thus present with sinners by his infinite justice, watches over his servants by the presence of his infinite mercy, and the arm of his unbounded goodness is ever held out for their protection. Sometimes he leads to the very brink of the grave, which is what is here meant by the word hell, that he may display the magnificence of his power and goodness in the deliverance of his servants. He permits Isaac to be bound and stretched out as a victim for sacrifice, and in an instant diverts the blow that is about to deprive him of life. He suffers the innocent Joseph to be confined in a dungeon with criminals, and on a sudden elevates him to the highest dignity in Egypt. He permits the three children, his faithful adorers, to be thrown into a furnace of fire, and preserves them in health and safety. Tobias himself he afflicts with poverty and blindness, and on a sudden restores his sight, and fills him with his best and choicest blessings

for time and eternity. Who then can doubt of the divine power or goodness? Who can want confidence in the divine protection, though he be placed in the extremity of danger and distress? The arm of his mercy is not shortened, but is and ever will be ready to protect those who faithfully serve him. If it is his will to deliver them, no creature can prevent his designs, or retard the effects of his mercy. How consoling is this truth to the servants of God, that they are ever under the eye of that omnipotent and all-merciful God whom they serve; who loves them as the apple of his eye, and guards them in all their ways. While the wicked, whose conscience reproaches them with criminal violations of the law of their God, tremble and shrink with fear at the thought of the presence of the Deity; the just rejoice in this truth, and their constant sense of it fills them with consolation and with hope. "Let God arise, and let his enemies be dispersed; and let them that hate him flee from before his face. As smoke vanisheth, so let them vanish away: as wax melteth before the fire, so let the wicked perish at the presence of God. But let the just feast and rejoice before God, and be delighted with gladness. Rejoice ye (just) before him: but the wicked shall be troubled at the presence of him, who is the father of orphans and the judge of widows." Psalm lxvii. 1. Animated with these holy truths, and impressed with gratitude for the protection which he himself had experienced from the divine power and goodness, Tobias invites all the people of God to join him in fervent thanksgiving.

Ver. 3. Give glory to the Lord, ye children of Israel, and praise him in the sight of the Gentiles:.....*4.* Because he hath therefore scattered you among the Gentiles, who know not him, that you may declare his wonderful works, and make them know that there is no other Almighty God besides him.....*5.* He hath chastised us for our iniquities; and he will save us for his own mercy.....*6.* See then what he hath done with us and with fear and trembling give ye glory to him: and extol the eternal King of words in your works.

The children of Israel, to whom Tobias himself belonged, and whom he here calls upon to unite with him in fervent thanksgiving to the Deity, were the chosen people of God. Selected by him from among the nations of the earth, they had been blessed with the knowledge of him the true God, had received a law from his mouth, had been guided by his hand, and enjoyed his divine favour and protection. But, ungrateful for the blessings by which they were thus distinguished from other nations, the Israelites provoked the anger of heaven by repeated crimes and rebellions against God, till, in punishment of their ingratitude, they were conquered by a foreign power, driven from their country, and doomed to a long and severe captivity in a strange land, among infidels who were plunged in the grossest idolatry and superstition. This severe punishment of the ungrateful Israelites, was a part of the designs of God's mercy towards his people. For the scourges of God's justice are the chastisements of a tender father, who studies the welfare of his children, and in visiting them with afflictions, seeks their true happiness. Thus, the dispersion of the Israelites among the idolatrous Gentiles, serves, in the order of divine providence, two great and important ends. First, it operated as a seasonable correction on the rebellious Israelites, made them sensible of their ingratitude, and recalled them to a sense of their duty. Secondly, the captivity of the Jewish people and their repentance, served to spread among the Gentiles the knowledge of the true God, by making known to them the greatness of his power and the serverity of his judgments, and thus prepared them for the blessing which was afterwards to be poured out upon them in their vocation to the Christian Church.

Entering into these views of divine providence, Tobias considers himself, and his brethren in captivity, as so many preachers sent to announce, to the idolatrous nations among whom they lived, the knowledge

of the true God. "Therefore hath he scattered you among the Gentiles, who know not him, that you may declare his wonderful works, and make them know that there is no other Almighty God besides him." This holy man exhorts his fellow-captives to acquit themselves faithfully of this duty, of preaching the truth by word and work; to co-operate with the designs of God's mercy towards the idolatrous nations; and, by holiness of life, and an edifying conversation, to promote the knowledge and the worship of the true God. The Apostle, St. Paul, gives the same advice to us Christians. We live in the midst of a world which calls itself Christian, and professes to know and to serve the true God; while its maxims are in direct opposition to the principles of Christianity, and the lives of its deluded followers are marked with the same vices that formerly disgraced the heathen world before the light of Christianity shone upon it. Looking upon ourselves, therefore, as captives and exiles in this world which knows not God, we are bound, in gratitude for the blessing of the true faith and knowledge of our duty, to spread around us the sweet odour of Christ, by innocence of life and sanctity of manners. "Be ye blameless and sincere children of God," says St. Paul to the Philippians, "without reproof in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation: among whom you shine as lights to the world." ii. 15.—St. Peter, admonishing Christians to consider themselves as strangers and pilgrims in this world, thus exhorts them: "Let your conversation be good among the Gentiles, that whereas they speak against you as evil doers, considering you by your good works, they may give glory to God in the day of visitation."

But the captivity of the Jews was designed not only for the benefit of the Gentiles, by diffusing among them the knowledge of the true God; it was to operate as a salutary correction of the stiff-necked and rebellious Israelites: "He hath chastised us for our iniquities, and

he will save us for his own mercy." The same truth is applicable to every individual; the afflictions with which God visits us, are at the same time the punishment of our past iniquities, and the instruments of God's mercy. The humble confession of this truth, under the trials which befall us, the sincere acknowledgement of our own unworthiness in the divine sight, and of the justice of God's judgments, will disarm the divine indignation, and draw down upon us, even in the severest of God's visitations, his mercy and his blessing. We behold the greatest of God's servants animated by this spirit of humility, and faithfully following its directions. The prophet Daniel, and the holy Tobias, though unconscious of any share in those grievous transgressions by which their people had drawn upon themselves God's severe judgments, yet remembering that no one is without fault in the sight of God, acknowledged themselves sinners, and in a spirit of penance, cheerfully submitted to the divine appointments. Let us imitate their example; and under every affliction, whether spiritual or temporal, fearful lest we should have contributed by our sins to draw down the wrath of God, let us by our humble submission to God's will, and the sincerity of our repentance, improve the visitations of heaven, and make them instruments of mercy and salvation. "See and consider," said the holy Tobias to his countrymen, "what God hath done with us, and with fear and trembling give ye glory to him: and extol the eternal King of worlds in your works."

Ver. 7. As for me, I will praise him in the land of my captivity; because he hath shewed his majesty towards a sinful nation.

God my beloved brethren, is no less adorable in his judgments than in his mercies. Whether he strikes us, or heals us, he is deserving of our praise; for all he does is designed to promote our everlasting good. Convinced of his goodness, let us ever, under all his

dispensations, pay him the grateful tribute of our praise and thanksgiving. Such was the conduct of Tobias: As for me, says this holy man, I will praise God in the land of my captivity; I will kiss his adorable hand that strikes me, and I will not cease to bless him for his mercy towards my sinful and ungrateful countrymen. They have abandoned him to serve idols, and have trampled his law under their feet; but he has chastised them, and he has scourged them, that he may bring them to repentance, and may make them partakers of his mercy.

Ver. 8. Be converted, therefore, ye sinners, and do justice before God, believing that he will shew his mercy to you.

Tobias now addresses those among his fellow-captives who, insensible either of the divine judgments or mercies, still remained obstinate in their evil ways, and exhorts them to repentance. Be converted, ye sinners; let the judgments which have fallen upon you, awaken you; renounce your iniquities; redeem your past crimes by works of justice; take the scourge of repentance into your own hands; shew the sincerity of your conversion by a change of life and conduct; and by fervent prayer, accompanied with the cries of a truly contrite and humble heart, seek with confidence the mercy of God. Neither the multitude nor the enormity of your sins can exhaust the treasures of his infinite goodness; but his mercy will receive your sighs of repentance, and your prayers will find favour in his sight.

Ver. 9. And I, and my soul, will rejoice in him.....*10.* Bless ye the Lord, all his elect; keep days of joy, and give glory to him.

After exhorting his sinful countrymen to repentance, the holy Tobias invites all the true children of Israel to unite with him in praise and thanksgiving. He styles the true Israelites, the elect of God, because they had been in a peculiar manner chosen by God to

be his people: "Ye shall be my kingdom, a kingdom of priests, a holy nation." *Exod. xix. 5.* But he confines not his address to the seed of Abraham; he exhorts all sinners, in every age, to tremble at the sight of God's judgments, and avert his wrath by repentance; and he calls upon all the servants of God throughout the Christian Church, in each succeeding generation, to begin with him here upon earth that homage of praise, adoration, and thanksgiving, which will form the unceasing occupation of the elect in the kingdom of the blessed.

TWENTY-FIFTH HOMILY.

Chap. XIII. ver. 11. Jerusalem, city of God, the Lord hath chastised thee for the works of thy hands.....12. Give glory to the Lord for thy good things, and bless the God eternal, that he may rebuild his tabernacle in thee, and may call back all the captives to thee, and thou mayest rejoice for ever and ever.

TOBIAS, inspired by the Holy Spirit, in this second part of his canticle, or song of thanksgiving, foretells events which were to happen in after ages. For the destruction of the city and temple of Jerusalem, and the captivity of the Jews, who were transported to Babylon, did not take place until a hundred years after this period of Tobias's history. Yet this holy man speaks of those events as if they had already happened, because the light which the Holy Spirit communicated to him, rendered them present to his mind and clear to his sight. The same circumstance is remarkable in all the prophets. Isaias and Jeremy, ages before the birth of the promised Saviour, described the principal circumstances of his life and death, with the same clearness and precision, as if they had been recording events of past history. This foreknowledge of future events, which God discloses on some occasions to his chosen servants, is one of the marks of his divine interposition, and one of the extraordinary means by which he makes known his truths, and manifests his chosen delegates to the world.

Tobias, in the prophetic vision with which he was favoured by the Holy Spirit, foresaw that the tribes of Judah and Benjamin, which still remained in their native country, would, like their brethren of the other ten tribes, experience the vengeance of God in a long banishment from Judæa. Unawed by a fear of those judgments which had fallen upon their brethren, and

remaining obstinate in their wickedness, the Jews were delivered by Almighty God in the hands of Nabuchodonosor, who carried them captives to Babylon, in the same manner as Salmanasar had treated the ten tribes that formed the kingdom of Israel. The severe vengeance which the Almighty thus took upon his rebellious people, is but a shadow of that dreadful chastisement which throughout eternity he will inflict upon wilful sinners, in their everlasting banishment from the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of the living God, and the joys that flow from the glorious presence of Him who reigns within it.

Tobias, at the same time that he foresaw the destruction of Jerusalem, and the banishment of its inhabitants, was consoled with a view of the restoration of the Jewish people, and their return to the divine favour and protection. He, therefore, exhorts his countrymen to be grateful for the divine goodness, and give due praise to the Most High for his wonderful mercy.

“Jerusalem, the Lord hath chastised thee for the works of thy hand. Give glory to the Lord for thy good things, and bless the God eternal, that he may rebuild his tabernacle in thee, and may call back all his captives to thee, and thou mayest rejoice for ever and ever.”

It is not, however, to the mere release of his people from captivity, to the rebuilding of the temple, or the temporal prosperity of the Jews, that the prophetic Tobias confines his view. Glorious as these events were, and wonderfully as they mark the interposing hand of divine Providence in favour of his chosen people, yet they sink into comparative insignificance, when contrasted with the blessings poured out upon mankind in the establishment of the Christian Church, and the graces diffused over the earth by her doctrines and her sacraments, to the end of ages. Tobias foresees the day when the knowledge of the true God

shall no longer be confined to an ungrateful, proud, and rebellious people; when He, to whom his Father hath given all the nations of the earth for his inheritance, the promised Messiah, shall come, to bring back the captive children from the slavery of sin and hell, and establish upon earth a kingdom that shall endure for ever. This kingdom, which is no other than the Church of Christ, was to take its rise from Jerusalem, and thence was to spread itself over every nation under the sun. Hence Tobias addresses the Church under the figurative name of Jerusalem. The divine Founder of this kingdom likens it to a grain of mustardseed, small and insignificant in its first appearance, but afterwards growing up, and becoming a large tree, in which the birds of the air seek refuge and repose. The Church, at its first establishment, was confined to the narrow limits of Jerusalem, but soon spreading its branches into the most distant parts, enclosed the kingdoms and people of the earth under its shade. Nothing more clearly bespeakes itself to be the work of God, than the establishment and the propagation of the Church of Christ. The instruments whom its Founder chose to employ for the accomplishment of this great work, in all human views were the most unlikely to succeed. Twelve men, taken from the lowest occupations in life, totally unacquainted with human learning, unsupported by an earthly power or protection, with nothing but disgrace, persecution, and death before them as their portion in this world, are commissioned to bring mankind to the belief that one Jesus, who had been rejected by his own people and nailed to a disgraceful cross, was no other than the Saviour of the world, and that all who refused to believe in him, would be eternally excluded from the happiness of a future state. In vain did the great ones of the world oppose the preaching of these men; in vain did the powers of hell unite with the princes of the earth in resisting the progress of the Christian faith. The

Apostles preached every where, the Lord co-operating with them, and shewing by the miracles which he enabled them to work, that they acted by his authority. The prejudices of ages gave way; and the heathens, renouncing their idolatrous superstitions, ran in crowds to embrace Christianity; so that in the course of a few years, the spiritual kingdom of Christ was established in most parts of the then known world. "We are but of yesterday," says Tertullian to the Pagans, "and we fill your cities, your towns, your armies, your palaces, and your houses." Thus was the church of Christ, the city of God upon earth, miraculously established; thus was the light of truth diffused over the nations that had hitherto sat in darkness and in the shadow of death. The prophetic view, with which Tobias was favoured of this glorious event, filled that holy man with raptures of joy, and he thus declares it to his fellow-captives:

Ver. 13. Thou, (Jerusalem, i. e. the Church) shalt shine with a glorious light, and all the ends of the earth shall worship thee... 14. Nations from afar shall come to thee, and bring gifts, and adore the Lord in thee, and esteem thy land as holy..... 15. For they shall call upon the great name in thee.

The prophet Isaiah, in a noble and sublime strain of prophetic eloquence, announces to the earth the same blessings, of the light of the gospel, and the wonderful propagation of the kingdom of Christ. "Arise, Jerusalem, be enlightened, for the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee; darkness shall cover the earth, and a thick mist the people thereof: but the Lord himself shall rise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen within thee. And the Gentiles shall walk in thy light, and kings in the brightness of thy rising. Lift up thy eyes and see; all these are gathered together, they are come to thee; thy sons shall come from afar, and thy daughters shall rise up at thy side. The strength of the Gentiles shall come to thee; all they from Saba

shall come, bringing gold and frankincense: and shewing forth praise to the Lord. The islands wait for me, and the ships of the sea, that I may bring thy sons from afar; their silver and their gold with them, to the name of the Lord thy God, and to the Holy One of Israel, because he hath glorified thee. And thou shalt suck the milk of the Gentiles, and thou shalt be nursed with the breast of kings, and thou shalt know that I am the Lord, thy Saviour, and thy Redeemer, the mighty One of Jacob." chap. ix.

These magnificent prophecies received their fulfilment in the glorious establishment of the Christian Church. When the Apostles began to announce the doctrines of their Saviour, the nations of the earth were buried in the thickest darkness: but Jesus Christ, the Sun of Justice, piercing these obscure clouds with the rays of his divine light, dispelled the mists that covered the world, and enlightened the earth with the splendour of the New Law, which completely eclipsed the brightness of the Old. As soon as this divine light shone upon mankind, nations ran in crowds to partake of its splendour; they entered into the city of God, his holy Church, revered it as a spot truly holy, brought the most magnificent presents to enrich her, offered in her their sacrifices to the Most High, and called with faith upon his holy name. Enriched with the spoils of the Pagan world, the Church, triumphing over the persecutors that opposed her progress, and gaining strength and fruitfulness from the blood of her martyrs, beheld the most distant nations reposing under her wings, and tasting in her precincts, the rich blessings which her heavenly Founder had commissioned her to impart to mankind.

Ver. 16. They shall be cursed that shall despise thee: and they shall be condemned that shall blaspheme thee: and blessed shall they be that shall build thee up.....17. But thou shalt rejoice in thy children, because they shall all be blessed, and shall be gathered together to the Lord.....18. Blessed are all they that love thee, and that rejoice in thy peace.

In his kingdom, that is, his Church upon earth, our divine Redeemer has assured us, that tares will be found mixed with the good corn, until he, the heavenly husbandman, shall come at the end of the world, and, separating the tares from the wheat, shall gather the good grain into his barn, but shall burn the tares with unquenchable fire. The same awful truths are here delivered by the prophetic Tobias; the curse of God is denounced against those who, either in faith or morals, shew themselves enemies of the Church of God. Woe be to those who blaspheme or speak evil against the true Church of Christ, who calumniate her, who misrepresent her doctrines, or seduce men from her into the by-paths of heresy and schism. But a much greater woe, or curse from God, will fall upon those ungrateful children of the Church, who, though nursed in her bosom, and fed with her milk of heavenly doctrine and the most holy sacraments, despise her orders, live in the violation of her precepts, disgrace her by a wicked life, and prejudice others against her doctrine by their scandals. The word of God here pronounces the condemnation of all such scandalous and rebellious Christians; and Jesus Christ declares that it shall be more tolerable in the day of judgment for heathens, who never knew the true God, than for such as bear the name of children of the Church, but live in disobedience to her sacred injunctions. The Church of God mourns over these her unhappy children; their ingratitude is a subject of deep affliction to her. But she is filled with joy and consolation at the holy lives and edifying conversation of her faithful children, knowing, as Tobias expresses it, that they are truly blessed; blessed upon earth in the friendship of her spouse, and destined for eternal blessedness, by being gathered together to the Lord. This blessing is first promised to those who build up the Church, to the Apostles and their successors in the sacred ministry, who by their preaching, their labours, and sancti-

ty of manners, propagate the spiritual kingdom of Christ throughout the earth. Such as these will receive a double crown; for, "they who instruct others unto justice, shall shine like stars for all eternity." But the blessing is not confined to them; it extends to all members of the Church, who, by a virtuous life and holy example, contribute to the advancement of this holy and spiritual edifice, the Church, and adorn the city of God. It is in these her faithful children that the Church rejoices; she beholds them united in one and the same faith, looking forward with hope to the same promised blessing, animated with a spirit of charity, walking in the footsteps of her divine founder, and directing their lives to the glory of their Creator. These form at once the joy and consolation of this holy mother the Church; she loves these her faithful children, and in return is loved by them. "Blessed are all they that love thee, and that rejoice in thy peace." All true children of the Church, sensible of the blessing which they enjoy in her protection, are interested in her prosperity, and rejoice in promoting her extension, and in contributing to her glory. While the children of the world, under the influence of ambition and earthly glory, devote themselves with eagerness to the service of their country, and cheerfully sacrifice their ease, their property, and their life, to advance its power and rank among nations; let it be our glory, as children of the Church, to extend her empire among mankind; let us embrace with cheerfulness every opportunity of contributing to the advancement of religion, of increasing the number of God's servants, and promoting the salvation of our fellow-creatures.

The Church is the city of peace, and they who truly love her, rejoice in her peace. This peace of the Church will not be perfect until her divine spouse shall unite her to himself in glory. Here on earth, she is exposed to storms, and conflicts, and dangers;

her peace is often disturbed by the vices and evil example of some of her undutiful children. But in the midst of these scenes of danger, she enjoys a foretaste of her future peace, in the divine protection, and in the virtues of those her faithful children, who by their unity of faith, the firmness of their hope, and the bonds of charity which unite them, afford upon earth an image of her future state of eternal peace. Tobias pronounces those blessed, who, by their steady adherence to the faith of the Church, their humble submission to her laws, and their bright virtues, preserve true peace within her bosom, and fly with horror from all those divisions in doctrine, or scandals, that might disturb her repose, or violate her unity.

Ver. 19. My soul, bless thou the Lord, because the Lord our God hath delivered Jerusalem his city from all her troubles..... 20. Happy shall I be if there shall remain of my seed, to see the glory of Jerusalem.21. The gates of Jerusalem shall be built of sapphire and of emerald, and all the walls thereof round about of precious stones.....22. All its streets shall be paved with white and clean stones, and Alleluia shall be sung in its streets.....23. Blessed be the Lord, who hath exalted it, and may he reign over it for ever and ever. Amen

The holy Tobias, no longer considering the Church in her state of trial upon earth, but favoured with a view of her magnificent glory in heaven, is enraptured with joy, and praising God for his unbounded goodness, ardently sighs for that happy day of eternity, when he and his virtuous offspring may be at once witnesses and partakers of its glory. This glory of the Church in its triumphant state, is no other than God himself, who is the light, the splendour, and the happiness of the heavenly Jerusalem. Under the figurative appellation of emeralds and precious stones, Tobias designates the elect of God; who, according to their different degrees of sanctity, like so many inestimable jewels, shall adorn the eternal city of God. Polished upon earth by the chisel and the hammer of

afflictions, they shall be translated to this heavenly edifice, and support and adorn this magnificent structure of God's infinite majesty. Into this holy city no unclean thing shall enter; all its streets shall be paved with white stone, with spotless innocence, and no other song shall be heard, than eternal hymns of praise and thanksgiving to God.

O God, blessed be thou for this immense glory which thou hast prepared for thy servants, when after their long captivity thou wilt console them with the presence of thy glory. Establish in our souls, in this our exile, the reign of thy grace, that thus we may be prepared to reign with thee for ever in the kingdom of thy glory. Amen.

TWENTY-SIXTH HOMILY.

Chap. XIV. ver. 1. And the words of Tobias were ended. And after Tobias was restored to his sight, he lived two and forty years, and saw the children of his grand-children.....2 And after he had lived a hundred and two years, he was buried honourably in Ninive.....3. For he was six and fifty years old when he lost the sight of his eyes, and sixty when he recovered it again. And the rest of his life was in joy, and with great increase of the fear of God he departed in peace.

WE now, my beloved brethren, draw near to the close of the history, which the holy Scriptures have recorded, of the virtues of Tobias. After having for four years endured the severe affliction of blindness with the most admirable patience and resignation to the divine will, at the age of three-score years he was miraculously restored to his sight, in the manner which you have heard related. It pleased Almighty God to prolong the life of this holy man to a very advanced age, that he might present to mankind a pattern of virtue in every stage of human existence. His declining years were an uninterrupted series of peace and domestic happiness, the happy fruit of his past fidelity to God, and the care which he took of his son in his infancy. The rest of his life, says the sacred text, was in joy; not that worldly joy which arises merely from earthly considerations, such as riches and temporal prosperity, but a joy springing from a consciousness of enjoying the divine favour and protection, accompanied with the sight of a family who made it their constant practice to serve God with fidelity, and devote their lives to the end for which they had received their being.

To the end of his life Tobias advanced in the fear of God; in that holy filial fear which is founded on a love of the Supreme Being above every other object,

and which carefully abstains from every thing that might in the least be contrary to his holy will. This gradual and constant advancing towards perfection, is one of the marks of the predestinated, and forms a distinguishing feature in the character of the truly just man. "The path of the just, as a shining light, goeth forwards, and increaseth even to perfect day." Prov. iv. 18. To aim at this perfection is the duty of all; the very first, and the greatest of the commandments is, "that we love the Lord our God with all our hearts, with all our minds, and with all our strength." But the full perfection of this love of our Creator is not attainable in this life, it is reserved for our future state in eternal happiness, when, being purified from the dross of earthly affection, all the faculties of our souls will be absorbed in God, and our only and never-ending employment will be the contemplation and the love of him. During our present state of existence, our love is at the best but imperfect; yet it is our duty to desire its complete perfection, and constantly to press forward towards the attainment of it. This is what our divine Redeemer calls, "to hunger and thirst after justice;" and he promises his blessing both for time and eternity to those who are faithful in fulfilling this duty. "Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after justice, for they shall be filled;" filled with abundance of divine grace in this life, to aid their spiritual advancement, and crowned with an eternity of blessings in the life to come.

Tobias, at the age of one hundred and two years, perceiving that his last hour was come, that hour after which he had long been sighing, called his family around him, and gave them his last advice, as the holy Scripture relates, in the following manner:

Ver: 5. And at the hour of his death, he called unto him his son Tobias, and his children, seven young men, his grandsons, and said to them:.....6. The destruction of Ninive is at hand: for the word of the Lord must be fulfilled: and our brethren, that are scattered abroad from the land of Israel, shall return to it.....7. And all the land that is desert shall be filled with people, and the house of God which is burnt in it, shall again be rebuilt, and all that fear God shall return thither.....8. And the Gentiles shall leave their idols, and shall come into Jerusalem, and shall dwell in it.....9. And all the kings of the earth shall rejoice in it adoring the king of Israel.

Tobias, on his death-bed, is favoured by the holy Spirit with a foresight of certain great events which, in the order of God's providence, and for the execution of the decrees of his infinite justice and mercy, were to happen in future times. The holy old man imparts the knowledge of these important events to his family, for their instruction, and to confirm them in their fidelity to God. He foretells the speedy destruction of Ninive, the return of the captive Jews to their native land, the rebuilding of the temple, and the calling of the Gentiles to the knowledge of the true God.

"The destruction of Ninive is at hand, for the word of the Lord must be fulfilled." When the Ninivites, by their wicked and licentious lives, had provoked the anger of God to the highest pitch, the prophet Jonas was sent on the part of the Almighty to denounce his vengeance against them. At the preaching of the prophet, that sinful people humbled themselves in fasting and penance, and by their repentance obtained a reversion of the sentence which the divine indignation had denounced against them. But the mercy of God was soon forgotten, and Ninive, in a short time, again sunk into vice and licentiousness. God, whose forbearance is without bounds, with a view to the repentance of that sinful people, delayed the execution of his threats for the long period of one hundred and eighty years after the preaching of Jonas.

But at length the decree of his justice was executed. Nabopalassar, king of Babylon, and Astyages, king of the Medes, with their united forces, attacked Nineve, took it, and levelled it with the ground. This event happened about thirty-seven years after the death of Tobias. The word of God, said that holy man, must be fulfilled. It is true, God is sometimes slow in executing his vengeance upon sinners, because being rich in mercy and patience, he wills not their death, but that they should be converted to him and live: but unless the sinner, listening to the call of divine mercy, averts the indignation of heaven by timely repentance, the vengeance of God will most assuredly overtake him, with a severity proportioned to the mercy that has been abused.

The second great event which Tobias foretells to his family, is the restoration of the captive Jews to their native land, and the rebuilding of the temple of Jerusalem. "Our brethren that are scattered abroad from the land of Israel, shall return to it. And the house of God that is burnt shall be rebuilt, and all that fear God shall return thither."

This prophecy of Tobias concerning the return of the captive Israelites, is to be understood not only of the ten tribes who were then actually dispersed over the Assyrian empire; from the circumstance which he mentions respecting the temple of Jerusalem, (which at the period of his death was still standing) it is clear, that he speaks also of the tribes of Judah and Benjamin, who still remained in Judea, but were afterwards transported to Babylon, and continued in captivity until Cyrus published an edict permitting their return and the rebuilding of the temple. The Greek text expresses this in clear and full terms. The edict of Cyrus served as a signal for all those among the children of Israel who feared God, to reunite in the worship of the true God according to the Mosaic law, and to renew, in his temple at Jerusalem, the sacrifices

which were appointed to be offered to him in that sacred place alone. Accordingly we find, that after the rebuilding of the temple, the Jews who dwelt in the most distant parts of Asia and in Egypt, on the principal feasts assembled at Jerusalem to assist at the sacrifices of the law. The Acts of the Apostles, in the second chapter, mention, that at the solemn feast of Pentecost, when the Apostles began to announce the doctrines of their divine Master, Jews were assembled from all parts of the then known world, and were witnesses of the miraculous effusion of the Holy Ghost upon the Apostles and first disciples.

It was soon after this descent of the Holy Spirit, that the last great event, predicted by Tobias, the calling of the Gentiles or heathen nations to the true faith and Church of Christ, began to receive its accomplishment. "The Gentiles shall leave their idols, and shall come into Jerusalem, and shall dwell in it. And all the kings of the earth shall rejoice in it, adoring the king of Israel."

Under the figurative name of Jerusalem, the prophetic Tobias again marks out the Church of Christ, and foretells its miraculous establishment and propagation. It is evident that the city and temple of which this holy man here speaks, are the same as in the preceding chapter; this city, into which the nations of the earth were to assemble in crowds after renouncing their superstitions, and this temple, in which nations and kings were to adore God, could be no other than the Church of Christ, the city and the temple of the living God. For the Jewish city of Jerusalem in the Old Law, never witnessed any extraordinary assemblage of converted Pagans, nor did the kings of the earth come to her rejoicing, to adore the king of Israel in her. On the contrary, Jerusalem, the city of the Jews, suffered the greatest of evils and persecutions from the heathen kings who surrounded her, and who, after several times profaning her temple and

plundering her inhabitants, destroyed her, and burnt the temple to ashes. It was the Christian Church, often prefigured in holy writ under the title of Jerusalem, which beheld the heathen nations bringing to her the spoils of their false gods, taking up their abode in her sanctuary, and adorning her by the most perfect practice of the sublime virtues taught by her Founder. After three centuries of persecution, the Church at length had the happiness to see the emperors and kings of the earth enrol themselves with joy among her children, adore as their God and King, Jesus Christ, whom the Jews had refused to acknowledge as king of Israel; and esteeming the cross, which had hitherto been a badge of infamy, as an ornament far surpassing the brightest jewels that adorned their crowns.

The virtuous and aged Tobias having thus comforted his weeping family, by unfolding to them the wonders of God's mercy reserved for future ages, gives them his last exhortation to virtue in these words:

Vcr. 10. Hearken, therefore, my children, to your father; serve the Lord in truth, and seek to do the things that please him:..... 11. And command all your children that they do justice and alms-deeds, and that they be mindful of God, and bless him at all times in truth, and with all their power.12. And now, children, hear me, and do not stay here: but as soon as you shall bury your mother by me in one sepulchre, without delay direct your steps to depart hence.....13. For I see that its iniquity will bring it to destruction.

In this admirable exhortation of a dying parent to his affectionate family, what truly excellent lessons of piety are presented to our view! This short discourse is an abridgment of those exhortations and lessons which Tobias delivered to his son on a former occasion, when he apprehended, in consequence of his blindness, that his end was drawing near. We witness in this dying Saint, no anxiety about temporal affairs; we hear from his lips nothing about the riches

of this earth, or those objects upon which worldlings set their hearts; but we behold a faithful servant of God bequeathing to his children a rich legacy of virtues; a treasure far surpassing all the empty honours, transitory wealth, and boasted titles, of a vain world. He exhorts his family to direct every action to the glory of their Creator; to consider him present in all their ways; to pay him faithfully the homage of prayer and sacrifice due to him; to bless him at all times, both in prosperity and adversity; to rejoice in the accomplishment of his divine will, ever just, ever holy, ever amiable; in fine to serve God in truth, by the diligent observance of all his commandments, and not suffer their lives to give the lie to their professions; but, while they profess to know and adore the true God, to manifest to the world the holiness and the truth of their religion, by a virtuous life and edifying conversation. Next to these duties, which are branches of the love of God, Tobias turns to the obligations of fraternal charity, and exhorts his family faithfully to fulfil them; to satisfy both justice and charity, and, more especially, to cherish in their hearts a tender compassion for their distressed fellow-creatures, and be ever ready to relieve and assist them in all their wants, both corporal and spiritual. Lastly, he gives directions for his own decent burial; and, to shew his unalterable and inviolate affection for his wife, requests that she may be buried in the same grave with himself. Then, foreseeing that the death of his wife would be speedily followed by the destruction of the wicked city of Ninive, he exhorts his family to leave that hardened people, lest they also should be involved in the same ruin. Would to God that Christian parents, like this holy man, were ever careful to separate their tender offspring from the corruption of a wicked world!—So great is this corruption, so pernicious are its effects, that thousands of young persons owe their eternal destruction to no other cause. The only meth-

od of securing the innocence and virtue of children, is, for parents to forewarn their tender offspring against the society of those who may endanger their morals, and never suffer them to form a connection that may taint their minds with the infection of vice.

The lessons of the virtuous Tobias; his exhortations, and his advice and directions, were faithfully followed in every point by his son and his grandsons.

Ver. 14. And it came to pass, that, after the death of his mother, Tobias departed out of Ninive with his wife and children, and children's children, and returned to his father and mother-in-law.....*15.* And he found them in health, in a good old age: and he took care of them, and he closed their eyes; and all the inheritance of Raguel's house came to him; and he saw his children's children to the fifth generation.....*16.* And after he had lived ninety-nine years in the fear of the Lord, with joy, they buried him.....*17.* And all his kindred, and all his generation, continued in good life, and in holy conversation, so that they were acceptable both to God and to men, and to all that dwelt in the land.

Retaining in his manhood the humble principles of docility and obedience which had guided his youth, the young Tobias fulfilled all his father's directions, and leaving Ninive, went with his wife and family to the house of Raguel his father-in-law. There, by his affectionate behaviour and dutiful attention, he consoled the declining years of his wife's parents, and, according to the promise which Raguel had made, at their death received the remainder of their, property. His children, inheriting his virtues, persevered in a good life and holy conversation, and were so eminent for their holiness of life, that they were universally beloved both by God and man. Thus did the fidelity of the elder Tobias, in discharging the duties of a parent, produce at once its fruits and its crown. The piety of this holy family of faithful servants of God was the fruit of the instructions, the prayers, and virtuous example of him who was the head and the chief of this race of Saints. The elder Tobias beheld his

son and his grandsons faithfully walking in the path which he had traced for them, and, in their virtues, reaped even upon earth the fruits of his pious labours. In the mansions of the blessed he now enjoys the full recompense of his care, and the souls thus sanctified by his lessons and example are so many jewels added to his crown of glory. Virtue is not an inheritance that decends by blood; it is a pure gift of God's bounty. Yet God generally rewards the care of virtuous parents, by blessing them with a train of virtuous children. By these examples, fathers and mothers are encouraged to discharge with fidelity the obligations of their state; to spare no labours in bringing up their tender offspring in the fear of God, to watch over the conduct of their children and servants, and, by word and example, to conduct them in the path that will lead them to an inseparable union in the kingdom of heaven.

TWENTY-SEVENTH HOMILY.

Chap. XIV. ver. 4. And the rest of his life was in joy; and with great increase of the fear of God, he departed in peace.

THE holy Scripture represents the death of the servants of God under the pleasing image of a sweet repose. "He slept in the Lord;" is the phrase in which the Holy Spirit expresses the happy departure of the just man from this vale of tears and misery to the eternal recompense of his labours. Of Tobias, in particular, the word of God testifies, that the last stage of his mortal existence was a continued scene of inward joy and spiritual consolation, the fruits of his past fidelity to God, and the prelude to a happy death. In nearly the same terms does the holy Scripture speak of his son, the faithful imitator of his father's virtues, who, after ninety-nine years spent in the service of God, died the death of the just. Having then, my beloved brethren, laid before you, for your instruction and encouragement in the path of virtue, the edifying example of these holy men during their lives, I cannot close these Discourses more properly, than by a few reflections on the happiness and the consolations which attend the death of the just. In detailing these consolations to you, I wish to impress upon your minds how far superior the situation of the servants of God under the New Law is to that of the ancient Saints; how many sources of consolation religion now holds out to her faithful followers, to which the Patriarchs and Prophets of old were strangers. Besides, however exemplary their lives were, however heroic their virtue might be, the full recompense of their sanctity was to them placed at a great distance, and death did not open to them an immediate admission into the kingdom of the blessed. But since the redeemer of

mankind has, by his blood, purchased for us again the inheritance which the disobedience of Adam had forfeited, innocence of life, and sanctity of manners, are no longer debarred from their promised reward of bliss; but the souls of the just servants of God are, in the moment of their departure from this vale of tears, admitted to the sight and enjoyment of their God, in the kingdom of his glory.

“Precious in the sight of the Lord, is the death of his Saints.” Psalm cxv. 5.—“The Lord helps them on the bed of their sorrow, he turns all their couch for them in their sickness.” Ps. xl. 4. To this, we, the ministers of God, can bear testimony. Called by the duties of our holy office to a frequent attendance upon the bed of death, we are but too often forced to be the melancholy spectators of the heart rending scene which closes the eyes of the dying sinner. But the same holy office sometimes animates our zeal, and consoles our labours, by making us witnesses and partakers of the joy that attends the death of the just. Oh! transport yourselves, my beloved brethren, to the bed of the dying Saint, while, for your encouragement in the path of virtue, I point out to you those sweet sources of consolation which diffuse themselves over the soul of the truly just man in the last scene of his mortal life.

It is the misfortune of the generality of men that during life and health they seldom or never make their last hour the subject of their serious reflections. Fixing their hearts upon the riches, the advantages, and the pleasures of this world, they employ all the faculties and powers of their souls and bodies in labouring for the attainment of earthly emoluments. Their whole time is spent in the pursuit of temporal concerns. Eternity is seldom or never thought of; its everlasting happiness, and its endless torments, are alike disregarded. Sometimes, indeed, the thoughts of death and judgment will force themselves upon their

minds, and excite sensations of alarm and terror; and happy would it be for them, if, instead of endeavouring to divert these alarms and fears, they would inquire into the cause of them, and give them a few moments serious reflection! But no; worldlings, having fixed their hearts upon this life and its enjoyments, cannot bear the thoughts of death; they startle at the very idea of it, because they know that it will tear them from those scenes, to leave which is a subject of the deepest regret to them; and because the moment of their death will bring them before the tribunal of that God whose service they have neglected, whose promises they have despised, whose judgments they have disregarded, and from whom they can expect nothing but a sentence of condemnation to eternal misery. This it is that renders death terrible to the generality of men; to the worldlings no less than to the notorious sinner.

But, what hold can these subjects of alarm have upon the soul of the just man? Does he either feel regret at the thought of leaving this world, or is he struck with terror at the near prospect of eternity?—No, my beloved brethren, whichever way the just man turns his thoughts, whether to the past or to the future, he meets with an abundant source of peace, joy, and heavenly consolation. During life, living by faith, and building his hopes, and expectations on the promises made by God to his elect, he fixes his heart on the eternal joys of heaven. In death he quits indeed the world; but the world he has ever considered in its true light, as an enemy to his eternal happiness. Its maxims he has carefully avoided; its delusive pleasures he has never suffered to make an undue impression upon his soul: in short, he has kept his heart and affections disengaged from the world, and has learned to die daily to it. To be finally separated from it cannot, therefore, give him much regret or uneasiness. But in quitting the world, the just man is torn from

his possessions and his friends;—is not this at least a subject of sorrow and trouble to his mind? Oh! no. Of his temporal goods the just man, during life, considers God as the sole master, himself as the steward; he uses them, according to the advice of St. Paul, as though he used them not, (1 Cor. vii. 30); he employs them in acts of mercy and charity, to his fellow-creatures; he lives in the disposition of being willing to part with them when God shall please to call him from them: hence, at the hour of death, he parts from them with cheerful resignation to the will of heaven.—To leave his friends and relations is, indeed, a more trying sacrifice. The ties of affection which bind him to them, he has neither been able nor willing entirely to break; but then he has regulated them by the maxims of the divine law. He has loved his friends in God and for God, with a due regard to his own and their eternal happiness. In death he arms himself against the feelings of nature, by the sentiments of a most perfect submission to the will of God. If he behold his friends, his wife, his children, or acquaintance, weeping round him, he addresses them in terms similar to those in which his divine Redeemer consoled his afflicted Apostles, when he told them that he was going to prepare a place for them, that where he was they also might be. After a few more years, says the just man to his weeping friends, after a few more years spent faithfully by you in the service of your Creator, we shall again meet in unchangeable and never ending bliss.—Thus does the just man part from all that is most dear to him: thus does he quit this life; a life which he has ever regarded in its true light, as a passage to eternity.

Having employed the few short years of his mortal existence in the faithful discharge of his duty, when he finds himself drawing near to the crown of his labours, he welcomes with joy the happy moment of his dissolution, makes a willing sacrifice of his expir-

ing breath, and cries out with his dying Redeemer, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit." Does the devil attempt to disturb the peace of his soul, by bringing to his recollection the faults and imperfections of his past life? These he has long been labouring to expiate by the exercise of daily penance, by humble prayer, by patience in sickness and affliction, by frequent confession and communion in a spirit of love and repentance, by assisting with devotion at the holy sacrifice of the altar, and by charity to the poor. Does the tempter endeavour to seduce him, by instilling into his mind thoughts of pride or vanity? He fights the enemy with the same weapons with which he has always vanquished him—humility and prayer. Sensible of his own nothingness and unworthiness, he flies for refuge to the wounds of his dying Saviour, to be washed in them from every defilement of sin, and fitted for his admission into the blessed abode of innocence and peace. Thus, with regard to the just man, death is truly without a sting: the thoughts of quitting the world and its enjoyments bring no cause for regret or uneasiness to the dying Saint.

But is not he uneasy or alarmed at the near prospect of that eternity into which he is entering? My beloved brethren, have you ever beheld the countenance of a prisoner, when after a long confinement in a lonesome dungeon he is restored to his liberty? Have you seen the sailor, after being tossed for months upon the boisterous ocean, entering the long wished-for harbour, and landing on his native shore? Have you beheld the soldier, after many years of separation from his kindred and friends, at length escaping from the fatigues and dangers of war, and returning home to repose in the bosom of his family? Was fear, or disquiet, or uneasiness, visible in the countenance of any one of these? Were they not all joy? Did they not seem transported with gladness?—Yet, all their joy was but a faint image of that sweet tranquillity of

mind, that triumphant joy and exultation which fill the soul, and often display themselves in the countenance of the just man at the near prospect of eternity. He beholds himself at the term of his labours and his conflicts; he reflects with pleasure on the storms and perils from which he has escaped, in sailing through the troubled ocean of this life; his soul contemplates with joy the happy moment which is to release it from its long confinement in the prison of the body, and call it to an eternal repose in the bosom of its Father and its God. He hears the beloved of his soul, his divine Redeemer, address him in the language of the heavenly spouse: "the winter is now past, the storm is over and gone, arise, my beloved, and come." Cant. ii. 10. He answers the sweet invitation in the words of the Psalmist: Psalm cxxi. i. "I rejoice at the things that are said to me, we shall go into the house of the Lord."—Psalm lxxxiii. "Blessed are they who dwell in thy house, O Lord, they shall praise thee for ever and ever."

But, is not God infinite in his justice, no less than in his mercy? Is not sin the object of his infinite and eternal hatred? Has the just man never during his life incurred the displeasure of his God, or provoked his justice by sin? Has he no alarm or uneasiness on this account?—No, my beloved brethren, all this serves indeed to keep him from that false security, that fatal presumption, which is the ruin of thousands. It fills him with a proper degree of that humble Christian fear which is ever united with a strong confidence in God. The just man knows, from divine faith, that during this life no man, however virtuous, can be fully certain that he is *just* in the sight of God. "Man," says the Holy Ghost, "knoweth not whether he be worthy of love or hatred." Eccles. ix. 1. But the just man feels within himself a strong and lively hope, that as he has daily laboured to walk with fidelity in the path of God's commandments, and to blot out his

faults by tears of true repentance, the merits of the passion and death of his Saviour have sealed his pardon, and secured him a place in the divine favour. The nearer he approaches to the hour of his death, the more abundant are his tears; the more heartily does he detest his sins, the more fervent are his supplications for mercy. The priest, the minister of reconciliation and peace, and dispenser of the mysteries of God, enters the chamber of the dying Saint, and presents to him the image of his crucified Saviour. With what ardour does he press it to his lips! how lovingly does he embrace it! With what humility and compunction does he confess to his spiritual physician the frailties and imperfections of his past life! And when the minister of God pronounces in his favour the sacred sentence of absolution; what faith, what hope, what humble contrition is painted in the countenance of the dying Saint!

But who can express the raptures of love and joy which fill his soul, when the priest presents to him the victim of his redemption, and the pledge of his salvation—the body and blood of his dearest Saviour? O, my Redeemer, he cries out, now that thou givest me thyself, one thing will I ask of thee, this will I beg of thee, that I may dwell in thy house for ever, and that I may sing thy praises for endless ages!—Strengthened with this divine food, how fervently does he unite his prayers with those which the minister of God pours forth, while he administers the sacrament of Extreme Unction, the last anointing, by which his work of repentance is consummated, his preparation for death is made perfect, and his passage into eternity is rendered safe and secure! Thus armed, what has he to fear? The infernal spirit can have no power over him; God who has adopted him for his child, is his comforter and protector; Jesus Christ has taken up his abode in him; the Holy Ghost dwells in him as in his temple, and the Angels of God encamp round about him.

At length, however, the moment of his final sacrifice arrives, and the agonies of death seize upon him. He summons all his strength to pronounce once more with ardent love the sacred name of Jesus, gives one more longing look for immortality, and expires. Thus does the just man die; or rather, thus does he triumph over death, thus does he begin to live eternally. His guardian Angel, who had received his expiring breath, conducts his soul to the happy company of the Saints, where he beholds his God face to face, is inebriated with a torrent of delights, is instantly and eternally happy. Oh! who will not cry out with Balaam, "Let my soul die the death of the just, and my last end be like unto theirs." Num. xxiii. 10.

My beloved brethren, to die the death of the just, you must first live the life of the just. Death is terrible to none but the wicked and the lovers of this world. Disengage then your hearts from the world and its sinful follies, and fix them upon eternity. Let it be your chief and greatest concern to labour in earnest for the salvation of your souls. Fly from sin and the company of sinners. Place the hour of your death daily before your eyes, and meditate on the consolations which attend the death of the just. Do penance every day for past faults; the rich, by acts of charity to the distressed, and by the mortification of yourselves in point of dress, company, and amusement; the poor, by performing your daily labour in a spirit of penance, offering it up to God, and doing it because it is his will. Be regular and fervent in the duty of prayer, each morning and evening; assist often with respect and devotion at the holy sacrifice of the altar, and unite the sacrifice of your life and death with that of your Saviour. By frequent confession, purify your souls from the stains of sin; and by often approaching to the holy communion, secure to yourselves those treasures of grace which Jesus has left you in the sacrament of his body and blood. Whilst

you have time, do good to all men, practising towards all in distress the works of mercy, corporal and spiritual, Be honest and just in all your dealings. Faithfully discharge your respective duties, as husbands or wives, parents or children, masters or servants. Walk always in the presence of God, and direct all your actions to his glory. Beg daily the intercession of our blessed Lady for the grace of a happy death, addressing to her that humble supplication of the Church of God, "Holy Mary, mother of God, pray for us sinners now and in the hour of our death, Amen." Let these, and the like exercises of piety, be the daily practice of your lives; thus, my beloved brethren, you will live the life of the just, thus will you have a well-grounded hope that you will die the death of the just, and with the just reign for ever in the kingdom of your Father.



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